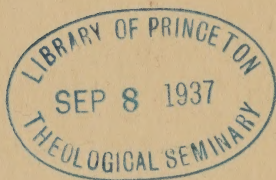


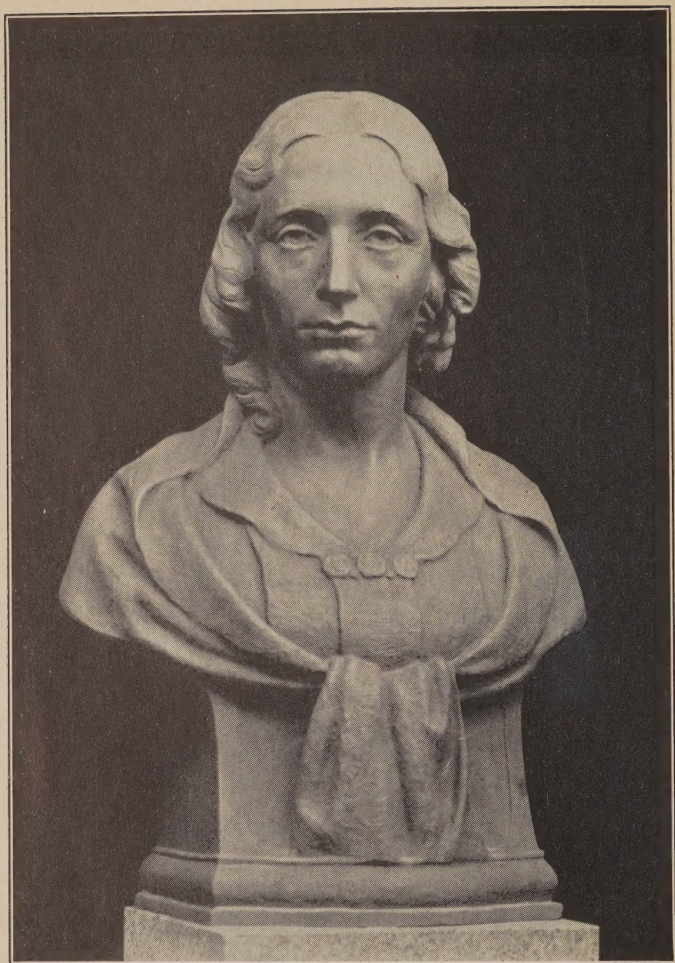
Harriet Beecher Stowe

Catherine Gilbertson



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Harriet Beecher Stowe



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

From the bust by Brenda Putnam in the Hall of Fame, New York University.

Harriet Beecher Stowe

By

Catherine Gilbertson



D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY
INCORPORATED

New York

London

1937

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To
RUTH COOK HYDE
and
HEWITT H. HOWLAND

❧ PREFACE ❧

LYMAN BEECHER began the chronicles of his family. At seventy-eight, he sat in the parlor of his daughter Harriet Beecher Stowe's house, in Andover, Massachusetts, and dictated his autobiography to his son Charles, who later assorted his father's letters and journals, collected memories from the other Beecher children, and edited *The Autobiography, Correspondence, etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* Thirty-four years later, Mrs. Stowe followed her father's example. With the help of her son Charles, she began the biography which he completed, *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe Compiled from Her Letters and Journals* (1889). At the time of her death, in connection with a new, uniform edition of her works, her life was rewritten and her letters edited by Mrs. James T. Fields, *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe* (1897). In 1911, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of her birth, her son with the help of his son, Lyman Beecher Stowe, rewrote his earlier biography and published *Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Story of Her Life*.

These books have furnished the material for numerous biographical sketches to be found in histories of America and of American literature, in collections of biographical essays, and similar places, the most recent one being included in a history of Lyman Beecher and his sons and daughters, by Lyman Beecher Stowe, *Saints, Sinners, and Beechers* (1934). There is little to be added to the facts contained in them. I have unearthed a few bits of information and corrected a few minor inaccuracies. They were written with neither critical perspective nor critical intention, to enshrine the memory of a much loved friend who had had an adequate portion of hostile criticism in her lifetime. But in 1926, in a group of biographical essays, *Trumpets of Jubilee*, Constance Mayfield Rourke turned the cold X-ray of current psychological analysis upon Mrs. Stowe with disintegrating results.

It is with the belief that the truth lies somewhere between the adulation of friends and Miss Rourke's science that I have undertaken to rewrite the history of a woman important because, as Miss Rourke points out, she embodied in an exceptional measure the thoughts and emotions of nineteenth-century America.

Her life-span all but covered the period of her country's development from the thirteen original states into a world empire. As her father's daughter, she grew up with a sense of public obligation that thrust her, willy-nilly, into the current of public affairs and forced her to think and to feel about them. By virtue of her inheritance, training, and experience, her reactions are American to such an extent that she might well have sat for a composite portrait of the

nineteenth-century American woman. Her ancestry—a line of blacksmiths on her father's side, a family of the genteel tradition on her mother's—was typical of American social confusion and bequeathed to her the multitude of contradictions and inconsistencies so conspicuous in the American character. Side by side with the blacksmith's common sense and practical ability went the dreaming proclivities of the gentleman and scholar. The pioneer's habit of looking for a better life beyond the next range of hills had always to do battle, on the one hand, with the cynicism engendered by daily contact with hard realities, and, on the other, with the genteel person's chronic nostalgia for the fleshpots of older civilizations.

As a woman, she had the American belief in the importance of women, born of their scarcity in pioneering days, and the American woman's independence, born of artisan strength and pioneering necessity, yoked with the conflicting belief of the genteel that a woman is a lady to sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam, while her knight does battle with the world.

Moreover, she was bred in the Calvinistic tradition of New England that formed so large a part of the fabric of middle-class American philosophy. For her, as for many others, religion not only gave point to living, but was also the chief intellectual diversion and the chief emotional escape valve in a society restricted at once by colonial poverty and by genteel conventions. But for her, as for others, the Calvinistic pattern was to be so altered by human needs and human destiny that, in the end, it was scarcely recognizable. In the religious history of Harriet Beecher

Stowe we have the religious history of middle-class, nineteenth-century America.

She wrote books for the reasons that have motivated nearly all American literature: the need of money and the impulse to preach. Writing always under pressure, she had little time either for premeditation or for revision, so that her work is not only free from the affectations and the restraints of art, but is also, of necessity, as she herself once said, spun out of what she had in her. Her books went through forty editions and were eagerly absorbed by millions of readers, both here and abroad, because they gave to the middle class everywhere a picture of the kind of life it believed itself to be living, and a voluble expression of the thoughts the nineteenth century believed itself to be thinking.

But after all that was typical has been accounted for, there remains something unique—emotional vitality, genius, heroism—unexplained by the psychologist, that lifts her above the crowd.

CATHERINE GILBERTSON

❧ ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ❧

I would express cordial appreciation to Lyman Beecher Stowe, Esq., and the estate of the Reverend Charles Edward Stowe for permission to quote from *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Compiled from Her Letters and Journals*, by Charles E. Stowe (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1889);

To Z. Boylston Adams, M.D., for permission to quote from *The Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Annie Fields (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston and New York, 1897); and for permission to reproduce the photograph of the bust of Mrs. Stowe by Susan D. Durant, from the same book;

To the Library of Bowdoin College for the use of the portrait of Calvin Stowe in 1853;

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To Harper and Brothers for permission to quote from *The Autobiography, Correspondence, etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D.*, by Charles Beecher, and to reproduce from the same book the portrait of Lyman Beecher, in 1830, and pictures of places connected with the life of Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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THEOCRATIC TWILIGHT



HOUSE AT LITCHFIELD

I

WHEN Harriet Beecher Stowe was sixty-six, she turned to wistful musing over childhood and youth and wrote in her last "serial story," *Poganuc People*, an account of the little girl that she liked to imagine she had been.

The suggestion of a cherub in the little girl's name, Dolly Cushing, is amplified by details: "a rosy mouth parted to show her little white teeth," great, blue eyes, brown curls glinting in the sunshine above a round, white forehead. Unhappily, she was a "late autumn chicken" who entered the family "when babies were no longer a novelty," when the house of the poor minister, her father, was already "full of the wants and clamors of older children," and was "disposed of, as she grew up, in all those shorthand methods by which children were taught to be the least possible trouble to their elders." Moreover, she was expected to make herself useful, pounding salt, grinding spice, beating eggs, roasting coffee, darning stockings,

stitching wristbands, "scratching" gathers, and turning sheets. Sensitive and lonely she was, too.

But after making these concessions to the reality of her own life, Mrs. Stowe compensates Dolly for her hardships by treating her as if she were an only child. The older children are shadows in the background, nameless, away at college, married to people in distant places. Even the two brothers still at home spend their days at "the academy" and scarcely concern either Dolly or the reader. Dolly is the center of interest, the youngest, the pet—not only of Nabby, the "hired girl," but also of her father and mother, of the Judge and the Colonel, and particularly of the aristocratic grandmother and aunt, Madam Kittery and her daughter Deborah, grandly remote in Boston. The last two are the fairies who send red shoes and dresses and London dolls to mitigate the bleakness of the Cushings' Calvinistic Christmas, and who ultimately provide the happy ending, rescuing Dolly from Poganuc and a possible marriage with a young peasant turned divinity student, and providing her instead with a knight out of Oxford, wealthy, handsome, and an Episcopalian like themselves.

No doubt this was the kind of happy ending which Mrs. Stowe believed her readers would enjoy. Besides, at sixty-six, she had no heart to lade Dolly with either her own private griefs or her burden of fame. In any case, this conglomerate of truth and fiction, if by no means the only revelation of Harriet Beecher Stowe, is still one of the best, not so much by virtue of the truth which she tells consciously, as because of the unconscious truths in the embroideries of fiction.

In *Poganuc People*, as in all of her books, she is preoccupied with religion. The first four chapters tell how little Dolly slipped away, one Christmas Eve, to a candle-light service in the tiny Episcopal Church. Now, not only Christmas services but the Episcopal Church itself were just beginning to lift up their heads in orthodox Old Calvinist Poganuc. Certainly the candle-light service was taboo for the orthodox minister's daughter. But Dolly enjoyed the spicy odor of young hemlocks banked against the walls and ground cedar festooning the rafters. A great, gold star hung above the chancel and candles gleamed in the windows. As the people chanted, "Glory be to God on high; and on earth peace, good will towards men," the child fancied that she heard "bells ringing in the celestial city."

The Christmas service created such a stir in Poganuc and so many of the Faithful wandered into it, that Dr. Cushing felt it necessary, the following Sunday, in his plain, uncompromising meeting-house, to set his congregation right about the matter of keeping Christmas. The Apostles had not kept it, nor was the twenty-fifth of December the birthday of Christ. It had not, indeed, been celebrated until after the fourth century, and then only to take the place of the old heathen *natalis solis invicti*. Moreover, it was bound up with those abuses to escape from which the New England founders had braved the wilderness. The congregation was both edified and satisfied. Dolly, warming herself on the frigid meeting-house bench with the thought of her new red dress and shoes, was satisfied, too.

The following Christmas, the candle-light service had

lost its allure; but there was a new distraction, a Christmas party at Madam Lewis's. Unfortunately, that was the day which Miss Persis, the village handy-woman, had selected to help Mrs. Cushing make the yearly supply of candles for the family. No one had time to dress Dolly for a party; so we have a pathetic picture of the little girl, sitting alone in the deserted school-house, watering a long seam with her tears, tortured by the image of other children playing at "oats, pease, beans, and barley grows" and feasting on almonds and raisins.

Still another Christmas brings the book to a close. Dolly, grown up and on her first visit to the Boston relatives, has acquired ideas of her own about the festival. If Christ was not born on the twenty-fifth of December, he was born on *some* day, and his birth should be celebrated. She writes ardently of the service in "old North Church," the decorations, the organ, the choir, the *Te Deum*: "How wonderful it is! . . . To think we are singing words that Christians have been singing for more than a thousand years! . . . When the communion service came, I went with Grandmamma and knelt at the altar. It seemed as if Christ himself was there giving me the bread and wine." In the same letter, also, she writes of the young man from Oxford and of her presents—a prayer-book bound in purple velvet, a pearl necklace, a scarlet cloak, a Chinese fan.

Between these events in the life of the heroine, the book recounts Parson Cushing's labors to save the souls of the plain people of Poganuc in the old New England way and to set up a bulwark against the flood of democracy which had already undermined the power of the orthodox in

Connecticut. The story is an unconscious parable, not only of the life of Mrs. Stowe, but of religion in the nineteenth century. She was born in the twilight of the New England theocracy and its fading outlines and merging shadows perplexed and shrouded her all her days. Always she was preoccupied with the decline and fall of the faith of her fathers and with the effort to make the text, "God is Love," justify the easy-going philanthropy that had taken its place, and to find in ritual a compensation, not only for earlier austerity, but also for the mysticism lost when religion became morality.

2

Poganuc is Litchfield, Connecticut, where Harriet Beecher was born, on June 14, 1811. And Dr. Cushing is a crayon sketch of her father, Lyman Beecher. There is, also, a Mrs. Cushing, but she is a shadowy lay-figure, not a portrait of any one, and yet useful for that very reason; for she is proof of how small a part mothers played in Harriet's development.

Mrs. Beecher, who was Roxana Foote, died when Harriet, her sixth surviving child, was five years old, leaving behind her twenty-four miniatures painted on ivory, other paintings of birds and flowers, and painted chairs and carpets, doilies of cobweb stitch and yards of bobbin lace, and in the hearts of her children the image of an angel. For the older children the image no doubt had humanizing details. Catharine Beecher, the oldest, wrote, "Our mother was gentle, tender, and sympathizing," and again, "Mother

was of that easy and gentle temperament that could never very strictly enforce any rules." But for Harriet and her younger brothers, Henry Ward and Charles, Roxana was a symbol, so that Henry Ward, in later life, could say, "My mother has always been to me what the Virgin Mary is to a devout Catholic." In Harriet's work she was to serve as the dead mother who inspired St. Clare of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Nina Gordon of *Dred*, and Mara of *The Pearl of Orr's Island*. For actual memories, Harriet could recall Roxana's voice saying, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy," and her patience when the three youngest children ate her choice tulip bulbs. She remembered, too—was it because the older children spoke of it?—that her mother read aloud to them from Maria Edgeworth's *Frank*.

In any case, Roxana was a "blue stocking" who even in girlhood had tied a book to her distaff as she spun. "Mary has, I suppose, told you of the discovery that the fixed alkalies are metallic oxides. I first saw the notice in the *Christian Observer*. I have since seen it in an *Edinburgh Review*. The former mentioned that the metals have been obtained by means of the galvanic battery; the latter mentions another, and, they say, better mode." Thus she writes to her sister-in-law, Esther Beecher, and continues plaintively, "I think this is all the knowledge I have obtained in the whole circle of arts and sciences of late; if you have been more fortunate, pray let me reap the benefit." Earlier in the letter she complains that the weather is cold, that Mr. Beecher has gone off to preach at Hartford leaving them with an inadequate supply of firewood, that a strange

clergyman is visiting them, that Catharine and George are sick, that Rachel, the servant, has cut off a finger, that she has not been able to read more than a page a week, that she expects never to have time to learn more than she already knows.

Here is the self-commiserating voice of that peculiarly American creature, the "lady" who does her own work, or part of it. Harriet Beecher Stowe was to echo it frequently. Was it, in Roxana's case, an expression of the inevitable disappointment of one who had earlier set her heart on Sir Charles Grandison for a husband? (That gentleman, created by Richardson to teach manners to the lower middle class, shaped the matrimonial notions of American girls for a century.) Or had her lessons in French and music and painting and needlework raised her taste above the plain labors of the New England kitchen? Or was it an inherited strain of gentility—a virus in the veins of American society from the beginning, harmless enough to those few in positions where gentility was not only easy but expected, but utterly inimical to the majority who had to adapt themselves to colonial living?

Much sympathy has been wasted on Roxana by a generation of biographers grown soft, anemic, and sentimental, who point to her poverty, her domestic burdens, her early death—she was forty-one—her husband's theology, and, most insistently, to her nine children. Her contemporaries told another story. Her daughter Catharine recorded "an impression of sunshine, love, and busy activity, without any memory of a jar or cloud," and her sister Mary Foote Hubbard wrote, "Another letter from Litchfield recalling again

all the pleasing features of life there—Roxana and Lyman visiting, reading, riding together, one in all pursuits, and duties, and friendships. How peacefully their life passes! how happily! how usefully!”

If Lyman Beecher was not Sir Charles Grandison, he was something better, and he loved her. “My friend, my dear friend,” he called her, and wrote at twenty-four, “Oh, Roxana, if we are children of Christ, if we are to be joint instruments in glorifying God, and joint partakers of heavenly glory, how near, how dear are you to me, am I to you!” And at seventy-nine, “Roxana, beloved still, this December 5, 1854.” And at eighty, “Time brings our long-delayed communion near with one not separated by a thin partition, but standing at the door.”

Whether or not her death was the result of seventeen years of being Mrs. Beecher, the immediate cause of it is plain. She died of tuberculosis contracted while nursing her sister Mary who had died of it three years earlier. Many died of tuberculosis in those days. Later, Harriet Beecher Stowe was to find the disease a convenient literary device for disposing of characters and providing climaxes.

She had a confused recollection of her mother’s death. For weeks there had been an unwonted, ominous hush upon their house; the strange spectacle of Roxana lying in bed, day after day, with bright pink spots in her cheeks; neighbors asking questions and bearing gifts; the embarrassment of grown people’s tears; then an avalanche of black garments, including black dresses for Harriet and three-year-old Henry. They said that Mother was “well forever” and then that she was dead, that she had gone to

Heaven. But Harriet had stood near when they lowered the long, black box in which she had seen the waxen figure—so like her mother, yet so repellantly unlike her—into the ground of the Litchfield graveyard.

3

After that, it was a comfort, at the end of a long day of jolting in stage-coaches, dozing now and then against Aunt Harriet's coat sleeve, to find herself, at nightfall, before the fire in Grandmother Foote's parlor. It was a familiar place, her refuge in family crises or when the Litchfield parsonage was overcrowded, so that Grandmother Foote and Aunt Harriet, the originals of Madam Kittery and her daughter Deborah, were by no means the strangers they appear to be in *Poganuc People*; nor did they live grandly in Boston, but simply and conveniently on a farm near Guilford, Connecticut.

Harriet was happy at Guilford. If Aunt Harriet scolded and punished, grandmother condoned and coddled. To both, instead of being one of the least of many, she was an individual calling for special training and attention. Her self-esteem rose enormously. Besides, the place and the people had glamour for the five-year-old child. Just what of the tangible provided it, one can only guess. Perhaps it was the feeling of order and quietness and space, or the bits of Canton china on grandmother's tea-table, or the India print that curtained the bed where Harriet slept with her aunt. (That was indeed remarkable—a mass of fantastic plants and among them the oft-repeated figure of a China-

man about to strike a bell which he never struck, and of a huge bird about to swallow an insect which it never swallowed.) Perhaps it was the sense of the past evoked by Great-grandfather General Ward's Revolutionary sword, or by Great-great-grandfather Colonel Ward's six silver table spoons marked "Louisbourg," or by the reverence with which Aunt Harriet treated all family relics—Aunt Catharine's embroidery, Aunt Mary's paintings, sea-captain Uncle Samuel's souvenirs from Africa and Spain and South America—implying the importance of the family itself. Perhaps it was the poetry of the Book of Common Prayer read nightly by Grandmother Foote, or the ballads of Walter Scott repeated by Uncle George. Harriet remembered the latter as the first poetry she had ever heard, although Scott had long been an intimate of the Beecher family. Perhaps it was the aura of gentility pervading the entire place.

The house Harriet knew, which her Uncle George had built a year or two before she was born, is extant, with harmonious additions, mellowed, of course, by a century of living and tending, but still white and prim. To-day, as one comes upon it in that part of Guilford Township known as Nutplains, lying low among well-fenced fields, with ancient oaks and elms brooding above it, a brook watering the little valley to the east, the weathered tombs of Wards and Footes visible through the trees on the slope beyond, all so neat, so husbanded, it seems a resting-place for the Guardian Angel of all genteel New Englanders.

In any case, the household at Nutplains provided Harriet with the stuff for dreams through which to escape the

humility of being a poor minister's sixth child and to appease the dissatisfaction with home and family so characteristic of American children. At sixty-six, it required no imaginative *tour de force* to transmogrify the Foote farm-house into Madam Kittery's Boston mansion; exacting Aunt Harriet into punctilious, high-church Aunt Deborah who talked about the "lower classes" and the "Pierrepont blood"; to fill in the background with colored servants, family silver, and portraits. White-haired Grandmother Foote in her low rocker by the parlor fire, her book-laden table at her side, her wide, gold wedding ring on her finger, needed little retouching to appear as aristocratic Madam Kittery, though perhaps Mrs. Stowe, in her mind's eye, lightened the somewhat heavy jaw that has been preserved for us in one of the twenty-four miniatures painted by Roxana.

It was probably at Nutplains that Harriet Beecher received her first formal religious instruction. Each Sunday morning during that fall of 1816, following her mother's death, she was taken to Christ Church, Guilford, and taught to make all of the responses in the service, and in the afternoon she and her cousin Mary stood at Aunt Harriet's knee and recited the Church Catechism.

The Footes, however, were not, like the Kitterys of Boston, dyed-in-the-wool Church of England. Grandfather Foote had been converted by living in an Episcopal family in Guilford, and upon his marriage had persuaded his wife and her father to join the Episcopal Church with him. So when Aunt Harriet Foote, on visits to the Beechers in Litchfield, swept past her brother-in-law's meeting-

house, on Sundays, to worship in the true Church, it was not with the zeal of a Tory, but with the zeal of conversion.

As a matter of fact, there was little difference between her faith and Lyman Beecher's, in early nineteenth-century Connecticut. Such differences as existed had to do chiefly with church polity and church manners. If one reads the Catechism and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer and accepts them without reservations, as did Harriet Foote, one will believe substantially what Lyman Beecher taught in his Congregational Church. To both salvation depended upon Faith and the mercy of God. Good works availed nothing, though, on the other hand, sin persisted in made it impossible to be saved. The chief difference between them lay in the fact that Aunt Harriet, having been baptized "a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom," believed herself in a more likely position to receive Divine Grace than Lyman, following the precepts of the school of Jonathan Edwards, thought possible. For both of them, Protestantism had robbed the sacraments of magic.

4

At the age of six, Harriet was in Litchfield again, going to school to "the Widow Kilbourne," learning to read and memorizing hymns and chapters in the Bible. And she had a new mother. Lyman Beecher brought her home

from Boston, where he had gone to preach against the Unitarians, barely a year after the death of Roxana.

She was Harriet Porter of Portland, Maine, daughter of a physician, and niece, on her mother's side, of Rufus, William, and Cyrus King. Of these, Cyrus was a member of Congress; William, the first governor of Maine; and Rufus, a member of the Continental Congress, the Constitutional Convention, and the United States Senate, and twice minister to Great Britain. Of Miss Porter herself, a contemporary writes, "she was justly regarded as a model," a young lady of "beautiful person, elegant manners, vigorous and cultivated intellect, generous spirit and extraordinary affability." Why she should have elected to become the wife of a poor country parson, age forty-two, a widower with eight children, becomes less incomprehensible after we read her first letter to Catharine Beecher. "In my view, a minister of the Gospel fills a most honorable station. He is to be considered a messenger from the court of Heaven. . . . To be an instrument of good to such is also honorable; it is a preferment, I think, far above the distinctions which usually give pre-eminence to this life." Some two months after her marriage, she writes to a friend, "Shall I tell you how much I admire Mr. Beecher's preaching? From his great study and experience, I think he is led into heights and depths unreached by any I have heard." In the spirit of ministering to "a messenger from the court of Heaven" she arrived in her new home and projected her "extraordinary affability" upon the family, the house itself, and Litchfield society.

As for what the little Beechers thought of their new mother, Mrs. Stowe wrote, in after years, "Never did mother-in-law make a prettier or sweeter impression. . . . A beautiful lady, very fair, with bright blue eyes and soft auburn hair bound round with a black velvet bandeau . . . smiling, eager, and happy-looking. . . . She seemed to us so fair, so delicate, so elegant, that we were almost afraid to go near her . . . her voice was very sweet, her ways of moving and speaking very graceful, and she took us up in her lap and let us play with her beautiful hands, which seemed wonderful things, made of pearl and ornamented with strange rings."

What happened to this radiant, exquisite creature that, barely a year later, Mary Beecher should write of her, "Mamma is well, and don't laugh any more than she used to?" From then on the shadows thicken about her in Beecher chronicles. Harriet took to referring to her as "my good, refined, neat, particular stepmother," and in later years wrote, "Had it not been that Doctor Payson (the Portland pastor who converted her) had set up and kept before her a tender, human, loving Christ, she would have been only a conscientious bigot." While Henry Ward described her as a "woman of profound veneration, rather than a warm and loving nature," and said that her prayers always made him feel as if he "were going into a crypt where the sun was not allowed to come." Eighteen years after her marriage, she faded away in a religious melancholia. "Her death," wrote Lyman Beecher, "sits heavily on my spirits. . . . My affection for her was sincere and un-failing. But her mental suffering, the result of constitution,

habit, and disease, during her decline, which I could not possibly alleviate, connects sadness with every reminiscence."

"Sincere and unfailing" affection! Hardly enough to carry her through the years of poverty and anxiety and controversy and religious revivals that marked the path of Lyman Beecher from 1818 to 1850. One suspects that from the first, despite the determinedly cheerful account of it in her letters, the Beecher household overwhelmed her. She found it fully organized and the pattern of it set by seventeen years of living and by the ebullient personality at the head.

It was a busy, crowded place. The parsonage was not spacious. Little is left of it to-day and that has been moved from the old Beecher lot and has lost its identity in a group of school buildings. What remains appears to be the part once built by Roxana to make room for boarders. The rooms are small, the ceilings low. "High above all the noise of the house," Mrs. Stowe described her father's study. Under the eaves it is and the ascent to it, steep and perilous; but "high" only to a child, and above noise only to a man too absorbed in what he was doing to notice noises. The house was always full. Besides Roxana's eight children, there were, at times, as many as five boarders, and the constant coming and going of visiting ministers, young men seeking advice, law students being lectured on theology.

There was little left to the second Mrs. Beecher except to fit herself into this establishment as best she might and to try to implant some of her own neatness and refinement

and religiosity in the younger children. The lay-figure in *Poganuc People* is evidence of how slightly she brushed the personality of one of them. Yet she and Harriet might have consoled each other in their mutual negligibility. But companions in adversity seldom have much respect for each other, and in this case they were temperamentally antagonistic. Mrs. Beecher's method of self-compensation seems to have been to wrap herself in her religion as in a shroud. The small Harriet had set her heart on being happy.

She gravitated toward happy people—toward Catharine who was always “making fun for everybody,” and toward her father who turned even the dullest chore into a game. To be sure, neither of them had much time to devote to her. Catharine was a young lady full of her own affairs; but she and Mary, a great girl of twelve, put Harriet and Henry and two-year-old Charles to bed at night and got them up in the morning, heard their prayers, scrubbed their necks and ears, brushed their hair, and fastened their buttons. Catharine could also be persuaded to take time off to write epitaphs for dead cats and officiate at their funerals, to dress dolls and tell stories; but it was not so much because of these services that Harriet liked to be near her, as because of her gaiety, of the way good times followed in her wake, and, more especially, because of her close friendship with Lyman Beecher.

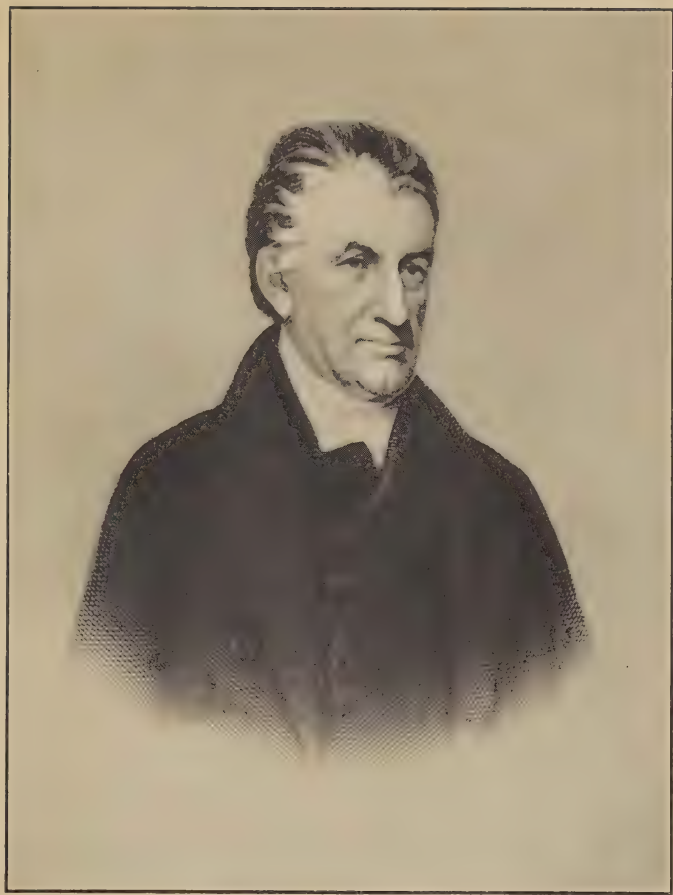
He was at the heart of life. To be sure he was always dashing off to save souls or retreating to his study to write sermons or articles for the *Christian Spectator*; but when-

ever he came into the family circle it turned into a festivity. Was the winter's wood supply to be cut and stacked, he made the job a contest to see who could cut the most and stack the fastest. Were there apples to be peeled for the barrel of cider apple-sauce, he sped the time with stories from Sir Walter Scott. In the spring when the Litchfield streams ran full and the trout leaped in their clear water, he loved to go fishing with his boys, to come home late of an evening and astonish the women-folk with his catch and then with his skill at cleaning and cooking it. In the autumn he would lead the whole family on nutting expeditions, himself climbing the tallest trees to shake down the nuts for the others to gather.

Day in and day out, the dinner table was a forum with Lyman Beecher taking the wrong side of every argument to train his children to defend the right. For the boys plodding over Virgil, he would translate with an enthusiasm that made passages, lifeless before, sublime forever after in their memories. At family prayers of evenings, he read the Bible in "an eager, earnest tone of admiring delight . . . and expectancy, as if the book had just been handed him out of heaven." The hymn singing grew into concerts with more hymns and Scottish ballads, Lyman leading with his fiddle. ("If I could only play what I hear inside of me I could beat Paganini!") He encouraged Edward and William with their flutes and Catharine and Mary at the piano. The piano was one which he himself had brought from his uncle's house at Guilford, with much personal concern for its tuning.

Impossible not to dwell on Lyman Beecher! This man whom a patronizing generation has buried under a mountain of anecdote, was potentially a greater person than either of his two more famous children. Loyalty to his mentor, Timothy Dwight, had unfortunately tied him to the past and placed him among the clergy who were the last of the Edwards line. In the middle of the eighteenth century Jonathan Edwards had attempted to put life into old Calvinism which was dying of formalism within and of heresy and schism without. But the "great awakening" was also the beginning of further disintegration which ended in the overthrow of the New England Theocracy. Edwards's doctrines were insupportable by average human beings and, moreover, he made the mistake of trying to support them with reason. Others could reason, too: that is a privilege of all Protestants and an inalienable right of American individualists. Lyman Beecher was a reasoner, indefatigable and adroit. Moreover, for him theology was a means, not an end.

The vitality which the blacksmiths who were his grandfathers had expended upon the anvil or in lifting barrels of cider, welled up in him as an inexhaustible enthusiasm for life and flowed naturally into the great channel of a religion that promised him life eternal. All that was sinister in the Edwards theology was a challenge to his powers to be saved and to save. So were all the forces threatening the downfall of orthodoxy—the Toleration Government (the government, he believed, of the irreligious who were intolerant of all religion) which in 1818 had disestablished the Congregational Church in Connecticut;



Lyman Beecher

From a portrait painted during his Boston Ministry.

Unitarianism in Massachusetts; the famous Taylor-Tyler quarrel among the orthodox themselves. In his old age a friend asked him: "Tell us what is the greatest of all things," and he replied, "It is not theology, it is not controversy, but it is to save souls!"

To save souls he labored for revivals of religion in each of his parishes; and Litchfield, which in the eighteenth century had slammed its doors in the faces of Whitefield and his kind, welcomed Lyman Beecher and loved him and allowed itself to be revived. "The first people here are decidedly the most religious," said the second Mrs. Beecher. But the poor people loved him best, recognizing him for a plain man like themselves. When he spoke to them on Sabbath mornings, wrote Mrs. Stowe, "he brought out upon the listening faces . . . a sympathetic gleam. Hard, weatherbeaten countenances showed it, as when a sunbeam passes over points of rocks."

As for anecdotes, let us remember one that he told himself of a morning during his early ministry at East Hampton, Long Island, when he got up at dawn to hunt ducks: "'Twas a great deal earlier than I had supposed; but I kept on, and came down the east shore, where the surf is always foaming up on the beach . . . wave after wave, rolling and roaring, as high as your head; but now . . . for once it was still; you couldn't hear a sound except a little softly murmuring noise as the ripples came creeping up the beach; 'twas as still as stillness itself. . . . I laid down my gun and sat down to hear such a silence as I never did before. I forgot the ducks."

5

Harriet was on the fringe of her father's attention, as well as of family festivities. All that was asked of her was conformity, and on the whole she was able to conform, although when she was eleven—almost grown!—Catharine was still admonishing her to sit still, to stand straight, to give heed when people spoke to her, to take more pains with her sewing and knitting. Occasionally she was moved by the prickings of vanity to call attention to herself, making faces to be laughed at, trying to astonish Lyman Beecher by her prowess at stacking wood. (He would have given a hundred dollars if she had been a boy!) But she early learned to keep out of the way and to fend for herself. There were always the younger children to patronize, Henry whose speech only she could understand, and Charles who was forever tumbling about and hurting himself, and presently a new brother, Frederick, weak and pale, who never smiled. With them she could ramble in the Litchfield woods or along Bantam River, through groves of hemlock and silver birch, hunting wintergreen berries or honeysuckle apples or the feather-like ground cedar. Or they could play on the wood pile, making gardens of moss and lichens, or swing themselves from low boughs in the apple orchard, or tunnel caves in the hay in the mowing-lot.

In winter they could rummage in the parsonage garrets, treading fearfully to avoid the rats. In the garret above the kitchen was a door they were forbidden to open; but

it reminded Harriet of a door in *Pilgrim's Progress* and opening it was a horrid pleasure. Behind it was a deep chasm in the kitchen chimney, where hams and dried beef were cured. The chasm glistened with condensed creosote, smoke passed through it, and rumblings and cracklings reverberated from below. It was like that door in the side of a hill through which Christian looked and "heard a rumbling noise as of fire and a cry of some tormented and . . . the scent of brimstone . . . a byway to Hell, a way that hypocrites go in at, namely such as sell their birthright with Esau; such as sell their master with Judas; such as lie and dissemble with Ananias and Sapphira his wife."

What a creepy pleasure it gave her to think of Ananias and Sapphira burning in Hell! She got the same feeling from the horrible stories (illustrated) in *The State of the Clergy during the French Revolution* which she had discovered, wedged in between *Bell's Sermons* and *Toplady on Predestination*, in her father's book-shelves; or from Cotton Mather's witch tales and stories of adventure in the New England wilderness, of fights with Indians and panthers and serpents (they had actually taken place right there in Litchfield!); or from *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* which her father once read aloud to them.

The older children frequently read aloud by the huge kitchen fire of winter evenings, books that Uncle Samuel Foote, the sea captain, had brought them, *Ivanhoe* or *Lalla Rookh*, or *The Prisoner of Chillon* or *Salmagundi Papers*. But Harriet liked best to read to herself, curled up in a corner of her father's study while he wrote his sermons.

And she enjoyed most the torn fragments of books which she found for herself stuffed among sermons and pamphlets in barrels in the garret—*Don Quixote* and *The Tempest*—or the unexpected entertainment in something that looked like a religious book, but turned out to be *Harmer on Solomon's Song*, telling about things one read of in the *Arabian Nights*; or such a book as Gesner's *Idyls* that made it possible to people the distant groves of chestnut and hickory, to the north of Litchfield, and to imagine herself mingling with white-robed shepherds and shepherdesses, playing ivory flutes or weaving garlands to hang upon Apollo's altar. Very early she must have learned the imaginative devices by which lonely children compensate themselves for loneliness; must have acquired the imaginary companions to meet her moods, who, in various guises, were to remain with her always.

One day in Aunt Esther Beecher's room, next door, she came upon *Lord Byron's Poems* and upon the line:—

“One I never loved enough to hate.”

Strange words that echoed within and staid with her always!

Every one talked of Byron, in those days. The child pricked up her ears to catch words clearly not intended for them. The poet's wife had left him. He was at fault, no doubt, and yet Lady Byron must be cold and unforgiving—a Pharisee, in fact, who had never really loved him. The young ladies at the Academy, who made shrines of his portrait and sang, “Fare thee well! and if forever,” with tears in their eyes, would have taken him to their hearts

and forgiven him anything. The young men at the Litchfield law school displayed their feelings by quoting his poetry and imitating his dress. A symbol he was of the effort of the increasingly powerful middle-class to save itself from its own respectability, to keep alive the romantic flame vicariously, in a world where romance had become an embarrassment.

A beautiful creature he seemed to Harriet, worthy to be Ferdinand in *The Tempest* or a prince of the *Arabian Nights* or Phoebus Apollo himself; worthy, indeed, to be the lover of whom Harriet had begun to dream. Catharine had a lover to whom she expected shortly to be married. But Harriet felt that she herself did not want any one quite like Professor Fisher. Harriet's lover, if we may judge by the many portraits she afterward painted of him, was to be a handsome, impassioned, adventurous, rather wild young man, whose slumbering nobility should be awakened by her love—Lord Byron transformed by matrimony into Sir Charles Grandison. It was a portrait secretly enshrined in the hearts of many maidens.

Lyman Beecher loved Byron, too—as he loved Napoleon, and Satan in *Paradise Lost*—and worried about the state of his soul. ("If he would do something for Christ, what a harp he would sweep! . . . If only Taylor and I could talk with him, we might get him out of his troubles!") He was a sinner. To love him was perilous—and beautiful! Harriet lying in a field of daisies and wild strawberries, on an afternoon in June, pictured herself suffering that his soul might be saved. Unfortunately, her own soul was not saved, either.

6

And yet she had not sat through the long hours of Meeting every Sabbath morning, and recited the Assembly Catechism every Sabbath afternoon for ten years—except for those Sundays at Guilford—without learning that she was a child of sin shapen in iniquity; without learning, also, what was expected of her if she would escape eternal punishment. She must have first a conviction of sin, a sense of herself as a depraved being, utterly devoid of holiness, and then complete faith in the power of God to redeem her if He would, complete devotion to Him, and complete submission to His will, whether He chose to redeem or damn. If through prayer she could bring herself to this state of humility and resignation, there was a chance that she might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the whole matter was highly problematic. Besides, she had heard it all so often, and both Heaven and Hell were still a long way off, and none of the other children had done anything about it either.

Her father was having a spell of dyspepsia and conducting a revival at the same time. The attitude of his children increased his temporary melancholia. "My heart sinks within me at the thought that every one of my own dear children is without God in the world, and without Christ, and without hope," he wrote. "I have no child prepared to die." And again: "The effect was powerful on the congregation, but at home as usual. . . . The children . . . all stupid. I know not what to do."

At the time, Harriet's attention was elsewhere. She was absorbed in writing compositions for Mr. John P. Brace at the Litchfield Female Academy. From Mr. Brace she first learned the pleasure of putting words on paper, of expressing herself freely and at length to an extent not possible in the crowded Beecher family where so many older people held the floor. A composition of hers was to be read with those of older pupils at the next exhibition. The subject was easy, for it was the sort of thing they talked of at home:

Can the Immortality of the Soul Be Proved by the Light of Nature:

The questions, "What becomes of the soul at the time of death?" and, if it be not annihilated, "What is its destiny after death?" are those which, from the interest we all feel in them, will probably engross universal attention. . . .

The first argument which has been advanced to prove the immortality of the soul is drawn from the nature of the mind itself. It has . . . no composition of parts, and therefore . . . is not susceptible of divisibility and cannot be acted upon by decay. . . .

Now because the mind is not susceptible of decay effected in the ordinary way . . . affords no proof that that same omnipotent power which created it cannot by another simple exertion of power again reduce it to nothing. . . .

But the argument proceeds upon the supposition that to destroy the soul would be unwise. Now this is arraigning the "All-wise" before the tribunal of his subjects. . . . We do not know but the destruction of the soul may, in the government of God, be made to answer such a purpose that its existence would be contrary to the dictates of wisdom.

The great desire of the soul for immortality, its secret, innate

horror of annihilation, has been brought to prove its immortality . . . upon this principle nothing which we strongly desire would ever be withheld from us, and no evil that we greatly dread will ever come upon us. . . .

Again, it has been said that the constant progression of the powers of the mind affords another proof of its immortality. Concerning this, Addison remarks, “. . . But can we believe a thinking being that is in a perpetual progress of improvement, and traveling on from perfection to perfection, after having just looked abroad into the works of her Creator and made a few discoveries of His infinite wisdom and goodness, must perish at her first setting out and in the very beginning of her inquiries?”

In answer to this it may be said that the soul is not always progressing in her powers. . . .

Who, but upon reading the history of England, does not look with awe upon the effects produced by the talents of her Elizabeth? . . . Yet behold the tragical end of this learned, this politic princess? Behold the triumphs of age and sickness over her once powerful talents, and say not that the faculties of man are always progressing in their powers.

From the activity of the mind at the hour of death has also been deduced its immortality. But it is not true that the mind is always active at the time of death. . . .

Again it is urged that the inequality of rewards and punishments in this world demands another in which virtue may be rewarded and vice punished. This argument, in the first place, takes for its foundation that by the light of nature the distinction between vice and virtue can be discovered. . . . And, secondly, it puts the Creator under an obligation to reward and punish the actions of his creatures. . . .

From all these arguments which, however plausible at first sight, are found to be futile, may be argued the necessity of a revelation. Without it, the destiny of the noblest of the works of God would have been left in obscurity. . . .

In the Gospel man learned that when the dust returned to dust the spirit fled to the God who gave it. He there found that though man has lost the image of his divine Creator, he is still destined, after this earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Harriet was eleven when she wrote this. She was never to write better—more logically, more succinctly, more eloquently. Was the excellence of this early effort due to the pruning shears of John P. Brace? Or to the influence of Lyman Beecher's forthrightness? Or to the ardor of adolescence unspoiled by the burdens and distortions of later years? We note particularly the middle-class New Englander's identification of soul with mind and neat handling of the Addisonian theory of progress. We like, also, the instinctive sympathy for Elizabeth—of a piece with the love of Byron and Napoleon and Satan himself. For once she was rewarded by Lyman Beecher's full attention, if only for a moment.

7

Then he and all of the family became engrossed in another matter. Catharine's lover was lost at sea. The Anglo-American mind is puzzled over her volubility at this time. Catharine writing oratorical letters to her brother Edward and to her friend, Louisa Wait; writing heroic couplets for Professor Fisher's monument and verses on the state of her own soul; rubbing salt into her wounds by going to spend months with her fiancé's family and

listening to Dr. Emmons preach damnation—all this seems alien to us who either write our poetry in the tranquillity following emotion that has subsided, or else stow it, as Emily Dickinson did, in secret places.

However, it is apparent that the whole experience changed Catharine from a fun-loving girl into a woman who, little by little, developed into the plain-featured, strong-minded, eccentric school-ma'am, who wrote what one theologian said was the best refutation of Jonathan Edwards on *The Will*. In any case, the death of Professor Fisher marked a turning point in Beecher history. It not only resulted in Catharine's opening a school in Hartford with Mary and, eventually Harriet, to help her, but also precipitated a religious crisis in the family.

Although many believed Professor Fisher to have been pious, still, as Lyman Beecher put it, he had been "without such evidence as caused him to indulge hope." "Oh, Edward, where is he now?" wrote Catharine to her brother at Yale. "Are the noble faculties of such a mind doomed to everlasting woe, or is he now with our dear mother in the mansions of the blessed?" The disaster, Lyman Beecher pointed out, was a warning to Catharine to give heed to the state of her own soul. For months the letters between them and also between Catharine and Edward, who was a "professor of religion" planning to enter the ministry, are concerned with her efforts for regeneration.

But Catharine was too honest to delude herself with the idea that she could submit in loving humility to a deity who might have consigned Professor Fisher to eternal damnation. "*I could not bend the knee, nor open my lips*

to pray to a Being whose character, to my blinded eyes, was so veiled in darkness and gloom." She must work out for herself a different conception. "I believe," she wrote, at length, "that a merciful Savior has not left him (Professor Fisher) to perish at last . . . and that in the Day of Judgment we shall find that God is influenced in bestowing his grace by the efforts of men; that he does make the needful distinction between virtue and vice."

Even with this unorthodox conclusion, she still could do little about herself. She was too honest to sentimentalize her emotions into a religious experience. "I feel no realizing sense of my sinfulness, no love to the Redeemer, nothing but that I am unhappy and need religion; but where or how to find it I know not." In the end she wrote to her father, "I shall return next week to Boston, where God is now granting his Spirit. Once more I will agonize to enter in at the strait gate, and while I remain there will take no rest day or night. But if I leave there with this wayward, hard, and sinful heart, I have no hope that I shall persevere in seeking religion . . . the world will soon engross my thought, and I shall receive its pittance as my portion."

Whether by virtue of resting neither day nor night the doughty Catharine laid herself open to the contagion of revival hysteria in Boston, the records do not say. We are told that eventually she joined her father's church in Litchfield. On what terms? Not by conformity to the orthodox pattern certainly. Over a period of years, in true Protestant fashion, she was working out a theology of her own—a theology which was the destiny of Protestantism in the

hands of middle-class Americans. For Catharine and her brothers Edward and Henry Ward, good works became progressively more important, and faith, divorced from them, increasingly dead. They were typical. Thus did nineteenth-century America, little by little, turn its back on both theology and mysticism—of which the vast majority had had little experience, anyway—and religion became morality and philanthropy.

8

A year after Professor Fisher's death Catharine had pulled herself together and was applying the time-honored, middle-class remedy for broken hearts, hard work. The Female Seminary which she and Mary opened in Hartford proved to have vitality and momentum of its own. The room over the harness store at the sign of the two White Horses on Main Street, became more and more crowded with pupils, restless, self-assertive, importunate, reciting an endless chain of lessons in spelling, arithmetic, geography, history, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, Latin, algebra, botany, chemistry—subjects which Catharine and Mary had to learn as they taught. Every week there was a flood of compositions to be corrected. The two girls found themselves plodding a treadmill. A year later they pulled thirteen-year-old Harriet upon it also.

Catharine's early sense of responsibility toward Harriet ("a mind trained from childhood under her care," she asserted later) stiffened and deepened with her own increas-

ing seriousness. When Harriet wrote *Poganuc People*, she left Catharine out of it.

The change from Litchfield to Hartford was drastic, but not without compensations. For one, Harriet had a room of her own. Nothing more precious at thirteen! A little convent-like space where she could close the door of evenings and imagine herself a poet, warming herself with reveries, spreading on paper thoughts too intimate for speech. She began the study of Latin and spent much of her treasured solitude translating Ovid into verse, her imagination caught by revelations of the antique world. She began to people it with creatures of her own. One of these was Cleon, the central figure in the earliest of her imaginative works. Afterwards, by other names and in various guises, he was to reappear in nearly every one of her novels. His Byronic origin is apparent—a beautiful profligate, noble at heart, a Greek, this time, at the court of Nero.

The previous spring, on his way to lead the Greeks to freedom, Lord Byron had died of fever in the swamps of Missolonghi. Lyman Beecher had shed tears at the news and had preached a funeral sermon upon the poet: "The name of the just is as brightness, but the memory of the wicked shall rot." Harriet never forgot the sermon, never ceased to concern herself about Lord Byron's soul, and never decided whether it could be saved or not.

At thirteen she was hopeful. In her solitary hall bedroom she filled a dozen little blank books with a play in iambic pentameter, showing how it could be done. And who better fitted for the task than Lyman Beecher, who would have loved it? So he appears as an aged Greek Christian,

Diagoras, to rescue Cleon from his "luxurious slough" in Nero's court and lead him through torture and disgrace to the Heavenly Kingdom. Cleon must, of course, suffer for his sins; for such as he there could be no salvation without atonement. Odd what a pleasure it gave her to torture him! And how ecstatic the nobility with which he bore it! Woven into her verses was the beautiful tenor voice of a young man who sang as he worked in the harness store beneath Catharine's school.

But before *Cleon* was finished, Catharine discovered it. If Harriet had time for such scribbling, she could more profitably be writing abstracts of Butler's *Analogy* and teaching it to the other pupils. That was hard, for the pupils were as old as Harriet herself.

Some of them, however, were among the compensations of life in Hartford. One or two could, in a measure, appease the longing for affection which was becoming so insistent. There was Catherine Cogswell, clever, handsome, magnetic, much sought after; and Georgiana May, older, graver, less popular but motherly and sympathetic. With her Harriet could discuss intimate problems as they wandered in a favorite grove of oaks along the banks of the Park River. (They planned to build homes in that grove when they were grown, and Harriet actually did.) They talked of love and marriage but were rather fearful of both. They talked of religion. Harriet had been reading Baxter's *Saint's Rest*. Its images of Heaven quickened in her the adolescent's yearning, so poignantly felt, so uncomprehended, to be absorbed into the source of life.

At Litchfield during the summer vacation, Lyman

Beecher was still praying over his stupid children. A revival was in progress.

"I thought last evening our street presented the most solemn scene I had ever witnessed," wrote Mrs. Beecher to Edward. "I left the house of the dying saint (Mrs. S.) about nine o'clock. Many persons were hanging about the doors and yard in perfect stillness. I crossed the street, and stepped softly into the anxious meeting, where a hundred poor sinners were all on their knees before God and your father was in the midst, pleading with strong cries and tears for the mercy of God upon them. Around the doors were a number of people, solemn as death. I could not but say, 'How awful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and gate of heaven!'"

Probably Harriet was not at this meeting; but during that summer and fall of 1825, there was an epidemic of conversions in the Beecher household. When in old age Mrs. Stowe told her son about her share in it, she repeated the account of Dolly Cushing's conversion given in *Po-ganuc People*.

On a Communion Sunday when the beauty of the summer stirred the longing within and sharpened her loneliness, she had a revelation as she sat listening to her father pleading with his congregation to trust their souls to Jesus:

Forgetting his doctrinal subtleties, he spoke with all the simplicity and tenderness of a rich nature concerning the faithful, generous, tender love of Christ, how he cared for the soul's wants, how he was patient with its errors, how he gently led it along the way of right . . . comforting its sorrows, with a love unwearied. . . .

Dolly sat absorbed, her large blue eyes gathering tears as she listened . . . her little earnest child-soul went out to the wonderful Friend. She sat through the sacramental service that followed, with swelling heart and tearful eyes, and went home filled with a new joy. She went up to her father's study and fell into his arms, saying, "Father, I have given myself to Jesus, and he has taken me."

The Doctor held her silently to his heart a moment, and his tears dropped on her head.

"Is it so?" he said. "Then has a new flower blossomed in the Kingdom this day."

Lyman Beecher's account of religious progress in his family is more matter-of-fact. On October 26th, he wrote to William that Mary and Harriet were among twenty-four who "now stand propounded," that George was "impressed but without hope." On November 1st, he recorded:

We have been this three weeks in a state of deep sympathy for George, whose distress precluded sleep, almost, for many nights, and his voice of supplication could be heard night and day. But today, and especially this evening, he seems to be very happy, and, so far as I can judge by conversation, on good grounds. He is now with the girls, singing louder than he prayed. What shall we render to the Lord! Mary and Harriet communed today for the first time, and it has been a powerful and delightful day.

At Thanksgiving time he added that Henry and Charles had "both been awakened."

In *Poganuc People* little Dolly, with soul all newly saved, moves on at once to save the frost-bitten soul of Zeph Higgins. And in the end, grasping in one hand her

purple velvet prayer-book and, in the other, the hand of the Oxford Knight, she disappears down an aisle painted by the sun that shines through the "storied windows" of the Episcopacy. What happened to the real Harriet was different.

9

In the spring of 1826, the home in Litchfield was broken up; for Lyman Beecher to whom, for years, Unitarianism had been "a fire in his bones," went to Boston to besiege the stronghold. He, it may be added, was always engaged in "the last great controversy which [was to] afflict the Church." The Millennium was around the corner.

"The idea of leaving Litchfield makes me sad," wrote Harriet. "The scenes where we have passed our earliest years are full of the feelings of youth. The beautiful lakes and woods . . . the delightful walks and prospects, are all dear to me. I never knew before how strong was my love for inanimate nature, though to me it is not entirely inanimate, for I have conversed more with it in Litchfield than with living beings."

The beautiful village with its charming Georgian houses, slumbering now under ancient elms, was a thriving place in her childhood, the fourth town in the state, with four forges, a slitting mill, a nail factory, a cotton factory, an oil mill, a paper mill, cording machines, fulling mills, grain mills, sawmills, tanneries, a comb factory, carriage-makers, saddlers, carpenters, joiners, and smiths. It had, too, a public library and a famous law school, kept by Judge Tapping Reeve and Judge James Gould, with students from all

over the country, and to match it, the equally popular Litchfield Female Academy, kept by Miss Sarah Pierce. To-day a granite boulder marks the place where the Academy stood, upon it a bronze plate engraved with a procession of young girls in Empire gowns and poke-bonnets and, hovering in the background, a group of dandies from the law school. The Academy procession moving to the sound of flute and flageolet, used to be a daily sight in Litchfield, and so were the dandies, who were always alighting from the red stage-coaches that rattled into town, or dashing up from the South on horseback, in pink gingham frock-coats.

The law students and the Academy girls used to entertain each other with balls on the third floor of Phelps's Tavern. But although the Beechers always had a group either of the young ladies or of the law students as boarders, and although each of the Beecher girls had a turn at the Academy, their social life touched Harriet not at all—partly because she was too young, partly because she was the parson's daughter.

Nor did she know much about life in the Georgian houses, although glimpses of the elegance within lingered in her memory and helped to round out the picture of the village when she came to write *Pogonuc People*. As a special treat she might wander of a Saturday afternoon along the paths of Mrs. Reeve's formal garden. Both Judge Reeve and Judge Gould were fond of Lyman Beecher and the families were intimate, and Colonel Tallmadge invited the minister to tea and came to tea with him in turn. But for Harriet the eighteenth-century men of the

world, the Tallmadges, the Walcotts, and the Demings, who had got rich off the Litchfield China-Trading Company, warriors and statesmen and men of affairs, who entertained Washington and Hamilton and Lafayette and delivered orations on the Fourth of July, were people to be looked at from a distance. "We should as soon have thought of climbing the church steeple as of speaking to one living so high and venerable above all boys as Colonel Tallmadge," said Henry Ward.

Nor in spite of the second Mrs. Beecher's statement about the first people being the most religious, does it appear that the Litchfield aristocracy took their religion too seriously. "What did I do at Litchfield but 'boost'?" said Lyman Beecher, in his old age. "They all lay on me, and moved very little except as myself and God moved them. . . . I could not get my salary (a pittance) paid quarterly or half yearly. I could not get a vestry, but held conference in that old West School-house, dark and dirty, lighted with candles begged or contributed among the neighbors, and stuck upon the side walls with old forks." Colonel Tallmadge and Julius Deming presented the Congregational Church with a silver communion service with an air of patronage that had little in common with the traditional Puritan's devotionism. ("We have silver services in our own homes. It is not meet that the Lord's House should have pewter.") Judge Gould could write banteringly, "Tell Mr. Beecher I am improving in orthodoxy. I have got so far as this, that I believe in the total depravity of the whole French nation." When in old age Mrs. Stowe asserted that the "Minister was the first gentleman of Poganuc," she was com-

forting herself with a theory that had ceased in practice, long before the Revolution.

But when as a child on the fringe of family activities, she sat in her corner by the fire in the parsonage kitchen, she made good use of those opportunities for observation that are among the blessings of the supernumerary.

The people of Litchfield who made the deepest impression upon her and whose images came to the surface of her imagination when she began to write books—perhaps because they were odd, perhaps because she knew them best—were the rural Yankee individualists, the cantankerous farmers, the herb-doctoring spinsters, the philosophizing storekeepers, the incorrigible jacks-of-all-trades; people whom she liked to compare to chestnut burrs, bristling without but velvety within—types that had been in American literature since the days of Nathaniel Ames's *Almanac* and have subsequently become the stock-in-trade of New England fiction. She was the first to popularize them.

IO

I know not how a minister can desire anything better than to preach the Gospel in Boston [wrote Mrs. Beecher]. We are at the North End, to which at first I felt reluctant. Mr. Beecher is enthusiastic in regard to this situation. This soil was pressed by the feet of the Pilgrims, and watered by their tears. Here are their tombs, and here are their children who are to be brought back to the fold of Christ. Their wanderings and dispersions are lamentable, their captivity long and dark, but God will turn it, we hope, and reclaim these churches; this dust and ruin shall live again.

In 1826, Unitarianism in the narrower sense was, as a matter of fact, on the wane in Boston. The masses had always found it too intellectual and the intellectuals had passed beyond it. William Ellery Channing had come back from visiting Wordsworth and Coleridge and studying society in France and Italy; was reading Fichte, the Schlegels, Schelling, and Schleiermacher; and telling his so-called Unitarian congregation in a paraphrase of Goethe that "the idea of God . . . is the idea of our own spiritual nature, purified and enlarged to infinity." Five years later, Emerson was writing in his journal: "Calvinism stands, fear I, by pride and ignorance; and Unitarianism, as a sect, stands by the opposition of Calvinism. It is cold and cheerless."

There was nothing cold and cheerless about Lyman Beecher; but, in any case, he had little commerce with the intellectuals. "The Cambridge College folks" forbade their wives and daughters to attend the revival meetings at his church in Hanover Street, so he said, "the whole weight of political, literary, and social influence was turned against [them], and the lash of ridicule laid on without stint." Probably, had he but known it, Cambridge College was hardly aware of him. Anyway, his revival proceeded. The revival spirit was, indeed, rife throughout the country, and in the end, the revivalists worried him more than the Unitarians did.

All accounts of him during the Boston period leave an impression of turbulence, of warfare without and within; of battles not only with Unitarians, tipplers, Sabbath-breakers, and politicians, but with Old Calvinists on the

one hand, and with the heretical, sectarian emotionalists, Beman and Finney, on the other; of battles with dyspepsia and melancholia fought out by pitching loads of gravel from one side of his cellar to the other, or by sawing wood or swinging himself on parallel bars; of upheavals of prayer; of crowded meetings of importunate converts; of sermons improvised while the church bells were ringing; of coat pockets bulging with forgotten memoranda and a forehead cluttered with forgotten spectacles. This was the period when, according to Mrs. Stowe, she drew nearer to her father than at any other time. Yet we question whether he was much aware of her. Her soul was saved.

Or was it? As a matter of fact, joining her father's church seemed to mark not the end but the beginning of her religious difficulties. Were they caused by the feverish atmosphere of the Boston household, where she spent her vacations? Or by the fatalistic sermons of the Reverend Mr. Hawes at the First Church in Hartford? Or by overwork in Catharine's crowded school? Or were they a symptom of adolescence? Religious conversions were a typical accompaniment of adolescence in Harriet Beecher's day and class. The long, introspective letters which she wrote to her brother Edward between the ages of sixteen and twenty, which seem to us full of an unintelligible, unhealthy religiosity, were duplicated by many of her contemporaries. Feeling which the inhibitions of the middle-class had dammed from its natural course, overflowed into religion, the only channel which respectability had left open to passion.

She dwells upon her sufferings and her sins. "I began

[this summer] in more suffering than I ever before have felt. . . . My views were very indistinct and contradictory . . . if you left me thus I might return to the same dark desolate state. . . . I could wish to die young and let the remembrance of me and my faults perish in the grave, rather than live, as I fear I do, a trouble to everyone." To her elders, no doubt, both her sins and the causes of her suffering were alike unapparent. In fact, we imagine that if Harriet herself had been asked to name them, she would have found it difficult to be specific.

She was puzzled and distressed because happiness had eluded her and yet it is just possible that she enjoyed being miserable and imagining herself a sinner. The Calvinistic theology lent itself to that sort of enjoyment. The distresses of adolescence were a confusion of pleasure and pain so that at times she relished the thought that, as the Reverend Mr. Hawes had suggested, God might leave her to make herself as miserable as she had made herself sinful.

However, if her life was warped by Calvinistic fatalism and the fear of Hell, as some critics assert, it was rather by inversion. There is something in all of us that enjoys the idea of Hell. It may have been the subconscious awareness of that enjoyment, the uncomprehended prickings and pullings of the sinister creature that skulks in our unplumbed depths, biding a chance to rend and crush, that gave her a sense of sin. As for the doctrines of Mr. Hawes, she was able at an early age to reject them with intellectual freedom. When he said in prayer: "We have nothing to offer in extenuation of our sins," she always thought, "We have everything to offer." Fatalism was never a vital part

of the teaching of Lyman Beecher. He was by nature too buoyant, too self-reliant, and too much a lover of people not to have a lively faith in the ability of the individual to help himself. It was this faith, indeed, which later involved him in a trial for heresy and placed him among the leaders in the new wing of a divided Presbyterian Church. In fact, if her father had had more time to devote to her case, it is likely that what he called his "clinical theology" might have curtailed Harriet's introspection with questions about air and exercise and diet. He might have warned her, as he did others, against "bewildering self-examination." ("Do you not know, my friends, that you cannot love and be examining your love at the same time?") In any case, Harriet had a way of not hearing sermons unless they suited her.

To escape the nervous pressure of life in the Hartford Female Seminary was another matter. Sensible Mary had had the wit or the good luck to take herself out of it by marrying a young lawyer, Thomas Perkins of Hartford. But Harriet, cast in the double rôle of pupil-teacher, lived in a world of women, a crowded world.

The school had been much enlarged; in fact Catharine had persuaded the citizens of Hartford to put up a proper building for her, with an assembly hall, a library, and nine recitation rooms. She employed eight teachers. Harriet's room of her own was a thing of the past. One year she is rooming with Miss Degan, "an Italian lady who teaches French . . . very interesting and agreeable"; another year, with Miss Fisher, Mary Dutton, and Miss Brigham. Miss Dutton, who is twenty, "has a fine mathematical mind

. . . Miss Brigham . . . somewhat older, is possessed of a fine mind and most unconquerable energy and perseverance of character." There are others who, Harriet feels, must exert an influence over her character: "Mrs. Gamage, a steady, devoted, sincere Christian." What a picture the names evoke of the "odd women" who inhabit schools for girls!—shut in and herded together, without the moments of individual privacy that monasticism affords, and with little leisure for outside contacts.

Harriet's young-lady clothes with voluminous skirts and stays irked her. She missed her brothers. She missed the long walks over the Litchfield hills, the berry-picking, the nut-gathering, the sledding, and the rest of her outdoor childhood.

"We spend our time in school during the day, and in studying in the evening," she wrote. "My plan of study is to read rhetoric and prepare exercises for my class the first half hour in the evening; after that the rest of the evening is divided between French and Italian." At another time, she tells her Grandmother Foote, "I have been constantly employed from nine in the morning until after dark at night, in taking lessons of a painting and drawing master, with only intermission long enough to swallow a little dinner which was sent to me in the school-room . . . when I did not go immediately to bed, I was obliged to get a long French lesson."

When it was too late, Catharine realized the need of outdoor exercise for Harriet, and herself as well, and provided riding horses. But in the meantime, Harriet had acquired a case of chronic fatigue, a habit of weariness, in fact,

which except in brief intervals of change and excitement she was never able to shake off; so that Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne, meeting her in middle life, described her as "tired far into the future."

Moreover, Catharine was committed to the principle that the end of all teaching should be ethical and religious. That subsequently she sought Mary Lyon as her Hartford successor, tells us much about the atmosphere of her school. Periodically she staged religious revivals, calling both her father and Edward into consultation. Her father's advice is illuminating: "The very high state of excited feeling, though extremely natural among young Christians, and powerful in its effect while it lasts, is too hazardous to health to be indulged, and necessarily too short-lived to answer in the best manner the purpose of advancing a revival. . . . You must, therefore, all of you, instantly put yourselves upon a different system . . . or you will be prostrate." Those who are superintending a revival, he adds, should cultivate "a genial warmth of heart, a steady benevolent temperature," not "the more intense heat and flashings of holy and animal affections and passions, all boiling at once in the heart."

Small wonder if adolescent Harriet had hysterics! And yet religious revivals were perhaps symptoms and outlets rather than causes of hysteria. Emotional relations in schools for girls are devious, when the naïve likes and dislikes of childhood, naïvely expressed, have suddenly become heightened and distorted by the restraints and the self-consciousness and the compulsions of adolescence. Harriet wrote later of her habit at this period of shrinking into

a corner to watch the behavior of others; of weighing the character of each new acquaintance; of expecting everything from friendships that had, in the end, given little. Was she referring to the Miss Duttons, the Miss Degans, and the Mrs. Gamage, whom she had expected to exert such beneficent influences on her character? Or was she thinking of the brilliant, popular Catherine Cogswell whom she might have loved? Why are there no letters to Catherine Cogswell? Perhaps there is nothing significant whatever in the way her name drops out of the record, while the kind Georgiana May remains to the end. But in the world of the Hartford Female Seminary the daughter of Lyman Beecher could have found little to release her share of his emotionalism to creative uses.

Vacations in Boston, going to revival meetings, sewing, knitting, reading, and helping Mrs. Beecher with the housekeeping and care of the younger children, were not much better. Mrs. Beecher, by this time, had three children of her own, besides Frederick, her first born, who had died. The youngest, James, newly arrived, had "nothing to distinguish him from forty other babies," wrote Harriet. Her own brother Henry, who might have been companionable, was at Amherst. Nor was there much pleasure in visiting George, who was teaching in Groton and was as miserable as Harriet herself. She tried disciplining herself with written rules which she was too moody to follow.

It is just possible that being miserable and imagining herself a sinner was one of those subconscious ingenuities by which we save ourselves from too much pressure from without, or by which, on the other hand, we attract atten-

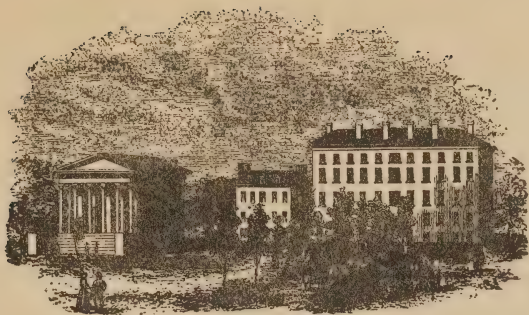
tion. At all events, Harriet attracted the attention of Edward, newly ordained pastor of the Park Street Church in Boston, who practiced his profession upon her; and of Catharine, with whom Edward had earlier worked out his theology. Together they set about convincing Harriet that "God is Love."

The task was not too difficult. Love, Harriet knew, was something she needed. In fact, the desire for love she suspected of being her generic sin. "I believe that there never was a person more dependent on the good and evil opinions of those around than I am. This desire to be loved forms, I fear, the great motive for all my actions." The mother who might have loved her was dead. Friendships failed. Urged by Catharine and Edward to love God, she believed that she did, that is, that she loved Christ. When it came to loving humanity as it pressed upon her in the Hartford Female Seminary, she was not so sure.

During a long vacation with Grandmother Foote at Nutplains, in the order and quietness and space of her earliest refuge, her weary, restless, unsatisfied spirit had glimpses of peace. Adolescence was passing. At twenty-one she wrote to Georgiana May, "Well, there is a heaven—a heaven—a world of love, and love after all is the life-blood, the existence, the all in all of mind."



NEW COUNTRY



LANE SEMINARY

I

THE letter to Georgiana May was written from Cincinnati. A new world! Perhaps a new life. At any rate the change of scene had brought one of those periods, familiar to the moody, in which Harriet felt it possible to turn over a new leaf, to view her single destiny in the light of the Eternal, and, as Uncle Samuel Foote advised her, to count only sunny hours.

2

The year was 1832. Andrew Jackson sat on the throne. The United States, after half a century of precarious existence, had still not made up their minds whether they were a nation or a federation of autonomous commonwealths. Two years earlier, Daniel Webster had furnished the school-books with copy for a century to come, pleading with Hayne and the American people: "When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in

heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union." But in 1832, a state convention in South Carolina adopted an ordinance declaring the Federal tariff acts of 1828 and 1832, "null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this State, its officers, or citizens."

Cleavages were already sharp between the industrial, financial aristocracy of the North and the agricultural, slave-owning aristocracy of the South; between the aristocracies and the working people, in both sections; and between the older civilizations of the East and the new democracy growing up west of the Alleghenies and beyond the Mississippi.

Two inventions lay at the roots of change. In 1814, the introduction of the power-loom had duplicated, in the northern states, the conditions of the earlier Industrial Revolution in England. To escape the slavery of wage-labor in factories, the more enterprising working people—as well as many congenital wanderers and drifters—began moving westward to seek independence on cheap public lands, greatly augmenting the earlier stream of land-hungry farmers, so that the population west of the Appalachians had increased from less than three hundred thousand, in 1800, to more than four million. The demand for public lands had become so great, indeed, that the revenue from them was to have a large share in paying off the public debt, by 1853; so great, also, that it gave rise to the unbridled speculation in land and to the overdevelopment of transportation and production facilities, which, together with the coun-

try's ill-considered and ill-formed banking system, were to precipitate the panic and depression of 1837.

Since 1793, Whitney's cotton-gin had given tremendous impetus to the demand for land in the South, also, and had changed the face of the country. Cotton had become King and slavery—a dying institution in the days of Washington and Jefferson—had grown so profitable and so like an octopus in its reach and grasp, that where Washington had taken gradual abolition for granted, William Lloyd Garrison had been impelled, in 1831, to found the *Liberator*. In that same year, also, a Negro preacher, named Nat Turner, had stirred up an insurrection of slaves at Southampton, Virginia, in which sixty-one white people, mostly women and children, had been massacred. In 1832, the Virginia Legislature was engaged in a prolonged debate on the question of slavery and was confirmed in its decision to do nothing about it by the philosophical defense of the institution propounded by Professor Thomas Dew of William and Mary College.

What had these matters to do with the Beechers? A great deal more, no doubt, than they themselves realized. Like most of us, they were scarcely aware of the insidious reach of the long fingers of public events into their private lives.

In the days of his Litchfield pastorate, Lyman Beecher had deplored the westward emigration, because it was depopulating New England villages. He was concerned, also, for the souls of the emigrants. Long before his day, as early as 1762, in fact, the Congregational Churches of

New England had begun sending missionaries westward. Since 1788, the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches had united their western missionary efforts, in order not only to strengthen them but to avoid duplication. Indeed, from 1788 to 1830, there was sufficient harmony between the two denominations to make it possible for Lyman Beecher to pass without comment from one to the other. ("I've tried both ways, and I wouldn't give a snap between them.") His first church at East Hampton had been Presbyterian. In Litchfield and Boston he had been a Congregationalist, but frequently attended meetings of the Presbyterian General Assembly. In Cincinnati he was called to be president of a Presbyterian college. This was Lane Theological Seminary, newly chartered, with sixty acres of land and an endowment of four thousand dollars. If Lyman Beecher would be its president, Arthur Tappan of New York would give twenty thousand dollars more and others would contribute sums amounting to about seventy thousand.

The invitation attracted him. "My interest has been greatly excited in the majestic West," he wrote to Catharine. "The moral destiny of our nation and all our institutions and hopes and the world's hopes turns on the character of the West, and the competition now is for that of preoccupancy in the education of the rising generation, in which Catholics and infidels have got the start of us. I have thought seriously of going over to Cincinnati . . . to spend the remnant of my days in that great conflict." He would want Catharine

and Edward and any of the other children who were so inclined, to go with him. Nevertheless, it took him two years to decide. His Boston church had burned and the congregation was scattered. He must stay with it until it was safely housed again.

In the meantime, dissensions within the Presbyterian Church itself, between Presbyterians and Congregationalists, between the theological seminaries at Yale and Andover, between Yale and East Windsor Hill, between Yale and Princeton, between theologians Taylor and Tyler, simmering for years, were coming to the boiling point. To Lyman Beecher their points of disagreement were trivial. The vital thing was to hang together to save souls. He attempted to act as interpreter and peacemaker and was, in consequence, under suspicion in all quarters.

In January of 1832, the secretary of the board of trustees of Lane wrote to him:

A desperate effort is making to ruin the seminary and the board in the estimation of the public. Your own character, too, has been assailed in the public papers of this city. Your theological opinions have been pronounced contrary to our Confession of Faith and dangerous to the purity and peace of the Presbyterian Church. The idea is now busily inculcated that you cannot renew your connection with our Church without the basest hypocrisy . . . and if you do not now come on the ground, you will have . . . a host of prejudices to encounter. . . . A large portion of our ministers neglect their pastoral duties and are busily engaged in hunting heresy, in defaming the character of their brethren, and in blowing the coals of strife and division. Will you not, under these circumstances,

come over and help us? Will you not come immediately? The case is pressing and urgent. . . . The land is before us in the length and the breadth of it, but the Amalekite and the Canaanite dwell there, together with the sons of Anak, and the people's heart is discouraged because we have no Joshua to say, "Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into our hands."

Clearly the secretary knew his man. He knew the situation, also, and did not exaggerate. Perhaps had Lyman Beecher known just how much of hardship for himself and his family lay in wait, he might not, at fifty-seven, have turned his back upon the advantages of preaching the Gospel in Boston. And yet, at eighty-three, raising his voice for the last time in Henry Ward's church in Brooklyn, he declared with fire in his ancient eyes, "If God should tell me that I *might* choose . . . whether to die and go to heaven, or to begin my life over . . . I would enlist again *in a minute!*" The lust of battle was in him. By way of reply to the secretary, he and Catharine went out to look over the field.

Cincinnati, in 1832, was vying with Lexington, Kentucky for the title, "Athens of the West." It was a center of travel and distribution. Lines of emigration from both Virginia and New England and from the states between converged there. Already the population was a mixture, not only of strait-laced Yankees and easy-going Southerners, but of Anglo-Saxons, Scotch, Irish, and Germans, and of blacks as well as whites. Ten years later, Lyman Beecher was to voice alarm over the "invasion of Catholic Europe," also. Steamboats and canals connected it with the East; the Ohio and the Mississippi,

with New Orleans. The Germans were making it musical; the New Englanders, "literary." It had two colleges, fifty-three common schools, and twenty-three churches, and, in spite of them, something of a bohemian character.

Catharine wrote back approvingly: "The city does not impress you as being so very new. It is true everything looks neat and clean, but it is compact, and a great number of the houses are of brick and very handsomely built. The streets run at right angles to each other, and are quite wide and well paved." Friends of the Beechers had preceded them. The uncles, John and Samuel Foote, were already well established there, and Catharine lists also, "Ned King, an old Litchfield beau, now General King; Cousin E. Tuthill; Abraham Chittenden's family from Guilford; Mrs. James Butler from Litchfield; Mr. and Mrs. Brigham, with whom we used to board at Dr. Strong's." Besides being president of Lane, Lyman Beecher would be pastor of the Second Church, "the best in the city. . . . Everybody gives a welcome except Dr. Wilson's folks." Dr. Wilson and his folks were the First Church. Catharine might well have taken them more seriously.

She also looked about on her own account. Her father's new plans seemed providential, at the time; for the Hartford Female Seminary had proved too much, even for her. On the verge of a nervous breakdown, she had already resigned her principalship to John P. Brace. But her interest in education had, if anything, increased. Having been convinced by her own handicaps of the

necessity of training for teachers, she was to spend the better part of her days trying to supply it. Cincinnati, she saw plainly, was suffering from want of just such a school as hers; for the only private school for girls was kept by a "lady" who wrote tragedies for the theater and took her pupils to see them acted, and who could not, obviously, have any conception of the true aim of education. Catharine was not equal to the task of starting a school herself, nor, she realized, was Harriet; but Mary Dutton and two or three of the best of the other Hartford teachers should start one, with her advice and with the help of occasional preaching and teaching from both Harriet and herself. Rooms were available in the city college building and the pious people of Cincinnati would coöperate.

In any case, she and Harriet would go with her father. So would George who was unhappy at Groton. Edward had already gone to be president of the new Illinois College at Jacksonville. Mary and her young husband would remain at Hartford. William, for the present, had a church at Middletown, Connecticut; Henry Ward was at Amherst; Charles, at Bowdoin.

Early in October of 1832, nine Beechers, including indispensable Aunt Esther, set out on their journey. The letters written about it by Harriet and George, long and humorous after the manner of the times, leave us with a peculiarly middle-class, evangelical taste in our mouths. They traveled almost the entire way by stage and were over a month on the road, not because the journey actually took so long, but because they sojourned in so many

places—New York, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Wheeling, Granville, Ohio—visiting good Presbyterians, while Lyman Beecher begged money for Lane, held prayer meetings and lectured, delivered sermons at Sunday services, attended a “protracted meeting,” converted an Andover graduate to “New School” theology. All along the way, temperamental George sped the time with hymn singing and improved it by hurling religious tracts from the windows of the stage at wayfarers and bystanders.

3

If they were moved by the strange, rich country through which they were passing, the letters give no evidence of the fact, aside from Harriet’s laconic mention of “fine scenery.” The Alleghenies—and Harriet had seen no real mountains before—go unsung; but a honeysuckle vine on a Pennsylvania tavern reminds her of one at North Guilford, and singing “Jubilee” recalls rides along the North Guilford roads. The New England countryside is suddenly very dear. “Those were blue skies, and that was a beautiful lake, and noble pine-trees and rocks they were that hung over it.”

In Cincinnati, she writes to Georgiana May about the beauty of Walnut Hills where Lane Seminary and the Beechers’ new home are situated. “Every possible variety of hill and vale of beautiful slope, and undulations of land set off by velvet richness of turf and broken up by groves and forests of every outline of foliage, make the scene Arcadian. . . . Much of the wooding is beech

of a noble growth. The straight, beautiful shafts of these trees as one looks up the cool green recesses of the woods seem as though they might form very proper columns for a Dryad temple." After this literary flourish she is willing to give ear to Catharine's summons to bed.

At another time she echoes Catharine's ideas about education. If Catharine felt that it was important "to turn over the West by means of model schools," no doubt it was. That the project brought Harriet herself no responsive quickening of the pulse, was due, she supposed, to her chronic lassitude and indifference—one of her sins. The Cincinnati school prospered sufficiently to be of interest to Harriet Martineau on her visit to America in 1835. Years afterward, she recalled having met Harriet Beecher there, wearing a white frock and black silk apron. If the latter was interested in the visitor, she left no record. Unfortunately, the somewhat detached, advisory nature of the connection which Catharine had planned for herself and Harriet proved an illusion. Catharine was soon running the "Western Female Institute" and Harriet fell into line, allowing herself to be burdened with details of teaching and management, writing a geography—her first published work.

Her new resolution to count only sunny hours became difficult to keep, because the sunny hours were so outnumbered. When her time was not taken up by the actual labor of the school, it was wasted in the depression resulting from it. The habit of weariness reasserted itself. She writes of illness and morbid feeling and un-

reasonable prejudice. But God is Love and Heaven is her home! Those are the thoughts with which she seeks to be resigned to life. To be seeking resignation at twenty-one, may imply frustration, or low vitality, or a sense of futility. It does not imply joyousness or even contentment.

"Her ill-health," according to her son, "was largely due to unregulated and unrestrained feeling. She lived overmuch in her emotions." True, no doubt, but superficial. Harriet understood herself better. Reading emotional experiences for herself out of those of Mme. de Staël, she reached the Freudian conclusion that her own feelings had turned morbid from being bottled up by "the constant habits of self-government which the rigid forms of our society demand. They are repressed and they burn inward till they burn the very soul. . . . All that is impassioned in admiration of nature, of writing, of character, in devotional thought and emotion, or in the emotions of affections, I have felt . . . till my mind is exhausted, and seems to be sinking into deadness. Half of my time I am glad to remain in a listless vacancy, to busy myself with trifles, since thought is pain, and emotion is pain."

The vaporous self-dramatization of this frequently quoted passage is obvious. It was written to Georgiana May and is merely an extreme case of the subjective effusions young women are likely to send to each other. When Harriet wrote to sensible Mary, she could chatter with witty objectivity about family matters—tea-time rejoicing over letters from Hartford, Aunt Esther's de-

votion, Jamie's intimacy with Cincinnati hogs, Mrs. Parson's pumpkin pies, the family physician who "enunciates his prescriptions . . . as though he were delivering a discourse on the doctrine of election." Yet underlying the sentimentality in the letters to Georgiana, is genuine distress.

She was nervous and anemic from the confinement and the long hours of studying and teaching which had been her lot during all of the difficult years since her thirteenth, as well as from the restrictions which nineteenth-century society put upon young women in general. Moreover, her world offered no emotional satisfaction. To gush over nature and books and religion and other young women, was neither to release emotion to creative uses nor to feel herself caught up into something larger, more significant, more sustaining. Nor was her case peculiar. In the emotional experiences of youth, as in so many other things, Harriet Beecher mirrored her age. Her unhappiness during the early days in Cincinnati was, in large measure, compounded of recollections of Hartford made more vivid by feeling herself in a strange country.

4

Socially, Cincinnati had a good deal more to offer her. Living in her father's house and being twenty-one, increased her contacts and the opportunities to escape from herself. The moderate-sized, two-story, brick house in Walnut Hills was as crowded and bustling as the

Beecher houses had always been, with thirteen in family, including the servants—two “Dutch” boys, an Irish girl, and a Welsh girl—and the usual coming and going of students and trustees and ministers and parishioners. The grove of oaks and beeches behind the house was a favorite picnicking place for young people. Harriet had ample opportunity to practice her new resolution to come out of herself and make casual friendships with all who would be friendly.

In Cincinnati itself, there were the uncles, John and Samuel Foote. What had brought them there? Perhaps the failure, thanks to Jefferson’s embargo, of the business in New York, which they had inherited from their Uncle Justin. We confess a partiality for Uncle Samuel. He had gone to sea at sixteen and, at twenty-one, had been himself the commander of a sailing vessel—an inquisitive humanitarian, who had consorted with Turks and Jews and Roman Catholics and relished putting in a good word for all of them, in Presbyterian circles. In Litchfield, he had brought the Beecher children oriental caps and Moorish slippers, ingots of silver and stories of his own adventures, as well as copies of Scott and Byron and Moore. In New York, he had taken Aunt Mary Foote Hubbard to see Cooke in *Richard III*. “As I never was at the theatre before,” she wrote, “I had an opportunity of deciding whether I approved of theatrical amusements; and I am decidedly of opinion that it is not a fit place for a decent woman to be seen in, much less for women professing godliness.”

Now, Uncle Samuel drew Catharine and Harriet into

the Semi-Colon Club, social and literary. The membership was not without interest. It included a future Chief Justice, Salmon P. Chase; Judge James Hall, editor of the *Western Monthly Magazine*, which published Harriet's first story; one of Judge Hall's regular contributors, Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz, the lady who wrote tragedies for the theater and took her pupils to see them acted. Her *De Lara or the Moorish Bride* had been awarded a prize of five hundred dollars and had been acted in Boston and Philadelphia. Later Mrs. Hentz, having moved to the South, wrote novels depicting slavery as a beneficent social influence. Then there were General King and his wife, Sarah Worthington. General King, besides being an old beau of Catharine Beecher's, was also a cousin of the second Mrs. Beecher, the son of her famous uncle, Rufus King. After his death, Mrs. King married William Peter, British Consul at Philadelphia, and in that city founded, in 1844, the first school in America to teach girls and women design and other arts applicable to industry.

There were also Professor Calvin Ellis Stowe and his wife, Eliza Tyler. Professor Stowe held the chair of Biblical Literature at Lane. His wife's father was the Tyler of the Taylor-Tyler theological controversy which had already caused Lyman Beecher much annoyance. But Eliza Tyler Stowe was not a party to any controversy—an exquisite, flower-like little person, lovely in the way that people used to declare was "too good for this world." She became the dear friend of Harriet Beecher.

Characteristically, in writing Georgiana May an account of the club, Harriet omits all mention of the people who composed it; but twenty-two years later, in the introduction to the second edition of her collection of short stories, *The Mayflower*, she wrote: "There are those now scattered through the world who will remember the social literary parties of Cincinnati, for whose genial meetings many of these articles were prepared. With most affectionate remembrances, the author dedicates the book to the yet surviving members of THE SEMI-COLON."

Nor beyond mention of her annoyance at certain members "who were getting . . . into the way of joking on the worn-out subjects of matrimony and old maid and old bachelorism," does she give any hint of the discussions that took place at the meetings. Did they dwell upon the theme—still so dear to American poets, painters, musicians, and critics—that American art, to be American must be AMERICAN? It is not unlikely; for Judge Hall, in his *Western Monthly Magazine*, was among the early editors proclaiming western literary independence—independence not only from Europe, but from New York and Boston, as well.

Perhaps these discussions were in part responsible for the homespun quality of those early stories of Harriet Beecher's. Her first published story, "A New England Tale" (printed in *The Mayflower*, in 1843, as "Uncle Tim," and in 1855, as "Uncle Lot"), for which Judge Hall gave her a prize of fifty dollars, is as American as the most American critic could wish. It is unlikely, how-

ever, that she consciously obeyed any critical dicta. Her interest in books was always moral and emotional, never technical—an attitude which is, in itself, thoroughly American. Still, what she read must, of course, have helped to shape what she wrote.

And what had she read, prior to 1832? The Beechers frowned upon nearly all fiction. Catharine believed it to be responsible for "the lassitude of spirits and *vis inertiae* of intellect that often result from over-excitement of the imagination . . . the false and mawkish taste—the wrong views of life and its trials, awakening hopes and wishes that can end only in disappointment and disgust—the false estimate of character." Catharine no doubt had in mind the works of innumerable "ladies" of Boston and New York and Philadelphia, who, under the cloak of anonymity, were indulging their romantic fancies for the delectation of other ladies. Had Harriet perhaps dipped into them surreptitiously, during vacations in Boston, when, as Edward said, she read everything that she could lay her hands on? Was that one of the temptations which her sinful soul had been unable to resist?

Had she, for instance, read the novels of Susanna Rowson, author of *Charlotte Temple* and other backstairs favorites that ran into forty editions? Mrs. Rowson, whose life and personality were more interesting than any of her books, was one of the first women to earn her living with her pen. She died in Boston just two years before the Beechers moved there. Sarah Wentworth Morton, author of the first American novel, *The*

Power of Sympathy, was still writing, in 1832; Catherine Sedgwick and Lydia Maria Child were well known; and Mrs. Trollope, who was just beginning her literary career, had but recently left Cincinnati where, thanks to her unlucky bazaar, "the great deformity of the city," she was still a sensation.

All of these ladies who wrote fiction had a touch of Italian fever, caught from Walpole and Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, probably, and all of them were haunted by the spirit of the German romantic school, so potent in mid-nineteenth-century America. Harriet's interest in Mme. de Staël might indicate that it had touched her, also. But the influence most obvious among them, one which Harriet undoubtedly felt, was the indoor, domestic moralizing of Samuel Richardson. The Beechers read Richardson, we know, and also Scott and Washington Irving.

However, John P. Brace had taught Harriet to revere Addison and Steele as masters of style. What more natural than that, when she set about writing a story, she should do what Irving had done, treat material, familiar and at hand, in the manner of the *Spectator*? What more natural for a middle-class, evangelical New Englander than that the story should have a moral and a religious purpose? What more natural, yet what more unusual, in a young writer, than this very naturalness? All of her better work was after this fashion.

Perhaps, too, homesickness had something to do with the choice of subject for her first story. Hear her own explanation:

And so I am to write a story—but of what, and where? Shall it be radiant with the sky of Italy? or eloquent with the *beau idéal* of Greece? Shall it breathe odor and languor from the orient, or chivalry from the occident? or gayety from France? or vigor from England? No, no; these are all too old, too romance-like, too obviously picturesque for me. No; let me turn to my own land—my own New England; the land of bright fires and strong hearts; the land of *deeds* and not of words; the land of fruits and not of flowers; the land often spoken against, yet always respected. . . . Now, from this heroic apostrophe, you may suppose that I have something heroic to tell. By no means. It is merely a little introductory breeze of patriotism, such as occasionally brushes over every mind, bearing on its wings the remembrance of all we ever loved or cherished in the land of our early years; and if it should seem to be rodomontade to any people in other parts of the earth, let them only imagine it to be said about “Old Kentuck,” old England, or any other corner of the world in which they happened to be born, and they will find it quite rational.

This early recognition of her proper field, as well as of her limitations, is worthy of praise. Other women had written about New England—Mrs. Child, Miss Sedgwick, Mrs. Hale—written in English of an impeccability never approached by Harriet Beecher, setting the stage with meticulous care for all of the appurtenances of living. Yet they had never conveyed the peculiar odor and savor of New England, nor made the New England character live in their pages. Because the latter half of the nineteenth century in America was cluttered with stories of characters peculiar to certain localities—particularly of New England characters—we may not care to remember who pointed the way for Rose Terry

Cooke, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and their lesser kinsmen. But, in any case, Harriet Beecher's *New England Tale* is the first genuine specimen of the "local color" genus.

Uncle Tim Griswold was also the first of her "chestnut burrs." She drew him from life, or at least from family traditions of the original, her father's Uncle Lot Benton, who had reared him. "He had the strong-grained practical sense, the calculating worldly wisdom of his class of people in New England; he had, too, a kindly heart; but all the strata of his character were crossed by a vein of surly petulance, that, half way between joke and earnest, colored everything that he said and did." For instance:

When Uncle Tim came home, he saw a long array of pies and rows of cakes on the kitchen table.

"Grace—Grace—Grace, I say! What is all this here flummery for?"

"Why, it is *to eat*, father," said Grace with a good-natured look of consciousness.

Uncle Tim tried his best to look sour; but his visage began to wax comical as he looked at his merry daughter; so he said nothing, but quietly sat down to dinner.

"Father," said Grace, after dinner, "we shall want two more candlesticks next week."

"Why, can't you have your party with what you've got?"

"No, father, we want two more."

"I can't afford it, Grace—there's no sort of use on't—and you sha'n't have any."

"O, father, now do," said Grace.

"I won't, neither," said Uncle Tim, as he sallied out of the house, and took the road to Comfort Scran's store.

In half an hour he returned again; and fumbling in his pocket, and drawing forth a candlestick, levelled it at Grace.

"There's your candlestick."

"But, father, I said I wanted *two*."

"Why, can't you make one do?"

"No, I can't; I must have two."

"Well, then, there's t'other; and here's a fol-de-rol for you to tie round your neck." So saying, he bolted for the door, and took himself off with all speed. It was much after this fashion that matters commonly went on in the brown house.

The story relates how Uncle Tim's daughter Grace is wooed and won, through the wooing and winning of her father, by James Benton. James is young Lyman Beecher, himself, done with humor and penetration and affection, but with a touch of patronage, also. Writing about him gave Harriet much pleasure. Was part of it—a subconscious part, of course—the opportunity to square herself for being his sixth child and a girl? In that unimportant position, she had, perforce, developed a certain detachment which had brought with it—as detachment will—aloofness, a sense of being not merely apart, but also slightly above, on something of a critical eminence, in short:

It is true that Master James had an uncommonly comfortable opinion of himself, a full faith that there was nothing in creation that he could not learn and could not do; and this faith was maintained with an abounding and triumphant joyfulness, that fairly carried your sympathies along with him, and made you feel quite as much delighted with his qualifications and prospects as he felt himself. . . . James understood every art and craft of popularity, and made himself mightily at home in

all the chimney corners of the region round about; knew the geography of everybody's cider barrel and apple bin, helping himself and every one else therefrom with all bountifulness; rejoicing in the good things of this life, devouring the old ladies' doughnuts and pumpkin pies with most flattering appetite, and appearing equally to relish everybody and thing that came in his way. . . . He knew all about arithmetic and history, and all about catching squirrels and planting corn; made poetry and hoe handles with equal celerity; wound yarn and took out grease spots for old ladies, and made nose-gays and knick-knacks for young ones; caught trout Saturday afternoons, and discussed doctrines on Sundays, with equal adroitness and effect. . . .

It was wonderfully contrary to the buoyant activity of Master James's mind to keep a school. He had, moreover, so much of the boy and the rogue in his composition, that he could not be strict with the iniquities of the curly pates under his charge. . . . This would have made a sad case, had it not been that the activity of the master's mind communicated itself to his charges . . . ; so that there was more of an impulse toward study in the golden, good-natured day of James Benton than in the time of all that went before or came after him.

But when "school was out," James's spirits foamed over as naturally as a tumbler of soda water, and he could jump over benches and burst out of doors with as much rapture as the veriest little elf in his company. Then you might have seen him stepping homeward with a most felicitous expression of countenance, occasionally reaching his hand through the fence for a bunch of currants, or over it after a flower, or bursting into some back yard to help an old lady empty her wash tub, or stopping to pay his *devoirs* to Aunt This or Mistress That. . . .

We shall not answer for James's general flirtations, which were sundry and manifold; for he had just the kindly heart that fell in love with everything in feminine shape that came his way, and if he had not been blessed with an equal facility

in falling out again, we do not know what ever would have become of him. But at length he came into an abiding captivity.

"I have to regret especially my excessive attachment, when quite young, to company," wrote Lyman Beecher to his son William. Like him, the convivial James is saved, and his social talents put to good use, by his going into the ministry. But we do not believe that even the subduing influence of the cloth could have made Lyman Beecher propose to Roxana like this:

"And if I do get *him* to like me, Grace, will you like me too?"

"I like you now very well," said Grace.

"Come, Grace, you know what I mean," said James, looking steadfastly at the apple tree.

"Well, I wish, then, you would understand what *I* mean, without my saying any more about it," said Grace.

"O, to be sure I will!" said our hero, looking up with a very intelligent air; and so . . . the matter was settled.

And yet what a thoroughly New England touch! Whether it was due to conscious realism or to Harriet Beecher's own inhibitions, the result is the same. She never wrote a passionate love scene, because she could not. All of the restriction of her class stood in her way. One could write of love to Georgiana May, or let passion overflow into religion, or give it voice in death-bed scenes; but on situations where passion was inherent, it was possible only to drop the curtain, as she does on the love story of Susan Jones and Joseph Adams, thus:

Our hero followed Susan to the front door, where she stood looking out at the moon, and begged to know what distressed her. . . .

Of course it was "nothing . . ."; and to show that she was perfectly easy, she began an unsparing attack on a white rose-bush near by.

"Susan!" said Joseph, laying his hand on hers, and in a tone that made her start. She shook back her curls, and looked up to him with such an innocent, confiding face!

Ah, my good reader, you may go on with this part of the story for yourself. We are principled against unveiling the "sacred Mysteries," "the thoughts that breathe and words that burn," in such little moonlight interviews as these.

Such evasions may reflect the shyness of youth. (One remembers how Levine in *Anna Karenina* made love to Kitty by writing initials on a scrap of paper.) They are common enough in both American life and American literature. Sometimes they are labeled "artistic restraint"; but in any case, they reflect the inability or the reluctance of Americans to express themselves on the matter of love between man and woman. Are they shy because they have never grown up? Or because the middle-class has too little to express? Or too much? At any rate, for Harriet Beecher to admit by writing about it, that either she or one of her heroines had any understanding of passion, would have been both un-maidenly and ungenteel.

In parenthesis, one might note that "Puritanism" which has been blamed for nearly everything that ails Americans, had nothing to do with the case. Behind all of the restraints that the nineteenth century put upon its behavior, as well as upon its art, was the passion of the increasingly powerful middle-class for gentility. This was the outward form of the gentleman-and-scholar tra-

dition which was rooted in the classical lore of the Renaissance, developed in the heat of Reformation ideology, and came to flower in the moonlight of eighteenth-century romanticism. Although a strictly middle-class evolution, gentility, in nineteenth-century America, had come to be the earmark of aristocracy. It was, at its lowest, mere conformity to the pattern of a civilization not at all understood; or, in the next stage, the conscious effort of sons of artisans and shopkeepers to make themselves gentlemen and scholars; or at best, the natural behavior of the few born into the gentleman-and-scholar tradition.

Thanks to the virility of Lyman Beecher, his children were less restricted by gentility than many others; but Harriet inherited a taste for it from Roxana Foote. Moreover, social pressure necessitated conformity to the genteel pattern.

In writing there were, none the less, outlets for emotionalism and compensations for restraint. For instance, to write about one's own uncomforted childhood would be to admit more than one cared to; but to write as an old bachelor who was such because he had "*too much* heart" rather than too little, who had been "an out-of-time, out-of-place, out-of-form sort of boy, with whom nothing prospered," was to keep one's self well under cover. If curious readers sought the original they would, of course, stumble upon Henry Ward or Charles, who had been such children.

I had just that unreasonable heart which is not conformed unto the nature of things; neither indeed *can* be. I was timid

and shrinking and proud; I was nothing to any one around me but an awkward, unlucky boy; nothing to my parents but one of half a dozen children whose faces were to be washed and stockings mended on Saturday afternoon. If I was very sick, I had medicine and a doctor; if I was a little sick, I was exhorted unto patience; and if I was sick at heart, I was left to prescribe for myself.

But in such circumstances, the Beecher children had had a traditional comforter, Aunt Mary Foote Hubbard, who had died when Harriet was two. One could warm one's self with the thought of her, produce an inward glow by bringing her to life and going off with her, and get into a positive enthusiasm by spreading the whole story on paper.

Or suppose a young woman was past twenty-one, and no Lord Byron had appeared, perhaps because the young woman was not pretty enough or charming enough, already too much of a school-ma'am, to attract Lord Byrons; or because not they, but divinity students moved in Beecher circles. We remember that Dolly Cushing of Poganuc knew that "the man she might love was not in the least like a blushing young theological student in a black coat, with a hymn-book under his arm."

What a compensation then, to imagine a romance for Florence, a maiden of pale cheeks and "spiritual forehead" and countenance "full of high thought"! Through sympathy for the poor, she brings back to her side "a tall and graceful gentleman" from France, whom she "had loved as a woman like her loves only once. . . .

He had traced her, even as a hidden streamlet may be traced, by the freshness, the verdure of heart which her deeds of kindness had left wherever she had passed. Thus much said, our readers need no help in finishing my story for themselves." That was as far as Harriet could go on paper, but nothing prevented her mind from going on and on. It was infinitely more absorbing than teaching school.

Had she never heard her father say that reverie was an "intoxication . . . extempore novel-making"; that a man who retired into the "garden of reverie" whenever he wished "to break the force of an unwelcome truth . . . must break up the habit or be damned"? She might have answered that we must adjust and protect and comfort ourselves as we can.

5

There were plenty of circumstances in the Beecher household that might either have taken Harriet out of her reveries or have caused her to seek refuge in them. There was temperamental George who was studying theology and needed to have both his clothes and his spirits mended; and shortly her favorite, Henry Ward, joined them, also to study theology and to confide a love affair; and then Charles, to wrangle with his father over Jonathan Edwards and to sacrifice theology to music; and William, perpetually in hot water; and Edward, the comforter, paying occasional visits. There was Mrs. Beecher's failing health

and increasing melancholia. She died in August of 1835. There were epidemics of cholera.

And there was the persistent hostility of Dr. Wilson and his "folks," noted by Catharine at the outset. How Harriet disliked him!

A tall, grave-looking man, of strong and rather harsh features, very pale, with a severe seriousness of face, and with great formality and precision in every turn and motion. His great ivory-headed cane leans on the side of the pew by him, and in his hand he holds the Confession of Faith. . . . There are men . . . whose minds have been brought up in a catechetical treadmill, who never say "Confession of Faith" without taking off their hats, and who have altogether the appearance of thinking that the Bible is the *next best book* to the Catechism.

Harriet's own religious thought had by then wandered into the extremes of Protestantism, where catechisms were of little moment and the Bible, a book open for any man's interpretation.

Lyman Beecher was not far behind her. Encouraging his congregation at the Second Church with "New School," "Taylorite" doctrines of "natural ability" and "immediate repentance," he soon had a revival under way. His church boomed and began filling up with young people. Presently, they were building a new vestry. Dr. Wilson, preaching "Old School" doctrines in the First Church, found his original animosity aggravated by having his fears realized. He began at once to accuse Dr. Beecher of heresy and hypocrisy and never let up, despite the fact that the Presbytery and the Synod acquitted him on both charges. The quarrel

was extended to the Beecher sons, when they presented themselves as candidates for the ministry, and to Lane Seminary as well, helping to keep it impoverished for years.

Feeling ran high in the Beecher family. There was the excitement of their father's last-minute departures for his heresy trials, amid tumbling trunks, gaping carpet-bags, and a litter of documents. There was repeated anxiety over the outcome; indignation boiling at slanders in the press; rejoicing over vindications.

Had the careers of her father and brothers not been at stake, Harriet would have found the theological quarrel unimportant, although it was part of the larger one which, in 1838, disrupted the Presbyterian Church. The issue was between the democratic extremes of Congregationalism, on the one hand, and the "high church" authoritarianism of Old Calvinists, on the other. Gradually the line between the two came to be a division of North from South, and thus the question of slavery was involved, also.

6

Slavery was something one had to think about in Cincinnati. In New England, Harriet had not given it much thought. Why should she? Some of the wealthy people of Litchfield had slaves as domestics. In Guilford there were "Darb the fiddler" and "Old Priest Fowler's Moses." They were odd and amusing, but as comfortable and contented as other servants. The Beechers themselves had had two bound girls who were colored, Drusilla and her sister

Rachel, and a colored laundress, Candace, and Grandmother Foote had had "black Dinah and Harry, the bound boy."

Her father had preached to a congregation of freed slaves, during his early ministry on Long Island, and to another in Philadelphia, on one occasion, two years before moving west. "I came down on them and upon them in a way that made them cry, 'Amen! amen! True! true! That's good! that's good! That's preaching!' and clap hands and jump up," he wrote. "Two hundred came forward and subscribed a pledge of entire abstinence which I wrote for them—the largest Temperance Society, I believe, ever organized at once. . . . About as much good, I *guess*, as I ever did in so short a time." How both speaker and audience must have enjoyed themselves! At the time of the Missouri Compromise, he had wept over "poor, oppressed bleeding Africa" in his family prayers, and also used the horrors of the slave trade for a Sunday morning sermon in Litchfield. Harriet had "sobbed aloud in one pew, and Mrs. Judge Reeve in another."

But he was not a Garrisonian abolitionist. Abolitionists were "the offspring of the Oneida denunciatory revivals . . . made up of vinegar, aqua fortis, and oil of vitriol, with brimstone, saltpeter and charcoal to explode and scatter the corrosive matter." Their violent methods would only retard the cause of freedom. Moreover, the immediate, wholesale emancipation of slaves which they advocated, would prove disastrous, not only for white people, but for the slaves as well, thousands of whom, still in a state of

semi-savagery, were incapable of taking care of themselves in a complex civilization. In Boston he had quarreled with William Lloyd Garrison on this point.

When his removal to Cincinnati brought him his first immediate contact with slavery, he was nearing sixty. All of his life had been devoted to the business of saving souls according to a certain theological pattern and of adapting that pattern to save more souls. It was not to be expected that he would suddenly espouse a cause which not only had no direct bearing on the task he had set himself—for, after all, a soul could be saved in slavery as well as in freedom—but which was already fomenting discord within his Church and was shortly to disrupt his school for potential soul-savers. "As to abolition, I am still of the opinion that you ought not, and need not, and will not commit yourself as a partizan on either side," he wrote to William. "The cause is moving on in Providence, and by the American Union, and by colonization, and by Lundy in Texas, which is a grand thing, and will succeed."

The only member of the family who had seen anything of slavery on a large scale and at its worst, was Aunt Mary Foote Hubbard, who had made an unhappy marriage with a slave-owning West India merchant. Slavery in the West Indies, according to family tradition, had so horrified her that she had "wished that the island might sink in the ocean with all its sin and misery, and that she might sink with it." A large part of her horror, the thing that had shortly broken her health and driven her to seek shelter with the Beechers in Litchfield, was the discovery that her husband had a mulatto family. Harriet, learning of this

circumstance, little by little, from remarks dropped by her elders as she grew up, relived within herself all of the New England girl's recoil from such a revelation.

Soon after they came to Cincinnati, Harriet and Mary Dutton crossed the river into Kentucky and made a visit to a plantation. It was a charming place, unique in their experience; spacious, friendly, negligent; wide rich fields of corn and hemp and blue grass, wide verandas, great, high-ceilinged rooms sparsely furnished with massive pieces of mahogany (was there a slight film of dust on it?); huge silver coffee-urns and tea-pots; huge platters of fowl and hams, and mounds of biscuits and corn-bread hot from the oven, lavish quantities of butter and cream. Everything had the air of having arrived where it was without effort, without care for expense, or undue concern for its preservation.

Harriet thought of the neat, compact, thrifty New England world and pondered where such extravagance could be leading. The mistress of the place was of "that natural magnanimity and generosity of mind" which Harriet came to associate with Kentucky women, but her husband had a way of lingering over wine after dinner and let his religious hopes rest on his wife's superabundance of piety. A genial person, however, kind to his Negroes, though he had some of them perform for the guests after the manner of pet monkeys. The Negroes themselves appeared contented and care-free. Their log cabins, covered with bigonia vines and set about with patches of garden, were not unpleasing. But they were property, none the less, to be disposed of like other property when an estate was to be

settled or to be levied upon for debt. Debt Harriet was sure there must be, where there was such an apparent absence of thrift.

On Sunday their hostess took them into town to church. In a pew near by, keeping watch over the children with her, sat a pious-looking young woman of a beauty new to Harriet—brownish skin with a flush in the cheeks; large, dark eyes with heavy lashes; silky, black hair rippling close to the head; a full rich figure set off by a smoothly fitting dress. A quadroon! The property of Mr. So-and-So! The two phrases suddenly evoked in the virgin Harriet not only the story of Aunt Mary Foote Hubbard, but a train of images from the unexplored cellars of her mind that left her frightened and nauseated.

Cincinnati itself harbored many colored people, freed slaves, for the most part, and fugitives. They were like dynamite. One trod gently, avoided collisions and extinguished the firebrands.

A firebrand not easily extinguished was Theodore Weld. From him and a considerable group of young men who had come to Lane because of him, Harriet may have acquired her subconscious distaste for divinity students. He was one of "the offspring of the Oneida denunciatory revivals," a disciple of Revivalist Finney, and, as general agent for the National Manual Labor Society, had cherished the ambition of founding a Manual Labor Institute at Lane Seminary. With that in mind, as he journeyed through the South and Middle West, he had persuaded a number of boys to join him. When he arrived at Lane in the spring of 1834, he brought four of them. Others fol-

lowed, many working their way down the Ohio on flat boats. Strong, raw-boned, uncouth young men, they were, not easily managed—"entirely radical and terribly in earnest," according to Lyman Beecher—who, if they objected to a professor, refused to attend his classes. Not long after their arrival, cholera broke out among them. Weld nursed the sick and prayed over the dying. Those who survived became wholly attached to him.

He began, at once, an open campaign against slavery, first organizing a society among the students to uplift the colored people of Cincinnati through education. That was well enough. The Beechers and others were not out of sympathy.

It must have been at this point that Harriet journeyed to Amherst for Henry Ward's graduation. One of her fellow-passengers in the stage was a Mr. Jones who was convinced that because Negroes were black they might as well be slaves as anything else. It warmed her heart to have another passenger rise indignantly to the defense of the colored race.

In the meantime, Weld's campaign was gaining momentum. He held a series of debates which induced the Lane students to pass resolutions in favor of immediate emancipation. They began to visit in colored families and to walk the streets with colored men. Cincinnati, in 1834, was in no mood for such demonstrations. There were ominous mutterings and open threats. Lyman Beecher warned Weld that he was on the wrong tack. Then vacation came. The Lane trustees, harkening to protests from the city, decided to put an end to the anti-slavery society.

When the Seminary reopened in the fall, there should be no more meetings, debates, or resolutions. When the Seminary reopened in the fall, Lyman Beecher returned from a money-raising expedition in the East to find that Theodore Weld had departed for Oberlin, taking the anti-slavery society, about three-fourths of the Lane students, with him.

That was a disaster from which the Seminary was slow to recover. If Dr. Wilson and his "folks" shunned it because it taught "New School" theology, anti-slavery forces in the "New School" party shunned it equally, because abolitionists of the William Lloyd Garrison school spread the news that it was pro-slavery.

The dilemma came home to the Beecher women in an acute shortage of money. As late as 1850, the impoverished Seminary still owed Lyman Beecher nearly four thousand dollars of back salary, a debt not discharged in full until 1856. In the fall of 1834, the disaster might have worried Harriet more than it did, had not her attention been absorbed by another matter.

» III «

LOVE AND MARRIAGE



RESIDENCE ON WALNUT HILLS

I

HARRIET returned to Cincinnati from visiting with Henry Ward at Amherst, to find that Eliza Tyler Stowe had died. At her death-bed Calvin Stowe had sobbed, "Oh, my love, remember, remember, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want! He leads me in green pastures beside the still waters! these comforts have delighted my soul. . . ." She waved her hands with joy saying, "Oh, how delightful! . . . Joy unspeakable and full of glory! There is not room enough to receive it!" and sank thus into sleep.

The bereaved husband, seeking an outlet for grief, found that he could pour it into the ear of Harriet Beecher. Harriet thought of the lovely Eliza, too good for this world, her dearest friend in Cincinnati, and felt bereaved herself. Besides, Mr. Stowe attracted her with the charm which the unhappy man always has for women. She was quite willing to let him talk of his wife and bewail his desolation and feel less desolate because of her companionship. She could

egg him on with reminiscences and praises of Eliza. His hours with her became more and more frequent, while the other Beechers and friends and acquaintances looked on and speculated.

A suitable match, on the whole. To be sure Professor Stowe was nine years older, stoutish and a little bald. But "Hattie was getting on" herself and had no beaus and was too "intellectual" either to attract or to wish for any but an older man, preferably, of course, a professor or a minister.

Henry Ward admired Professor Stowe extravagantly. Indeed, one could readily see that he was all of those things one should wish for most in a husband; upright, moral, religious, kindly, learned, and literary—an omnivorous reader, indeed, who read Greek and Hebrew and German and French and Italian with facility, carried a copy of the *Divina Comedia* in Italian and of the New Testament in Greek, in his pocket, and slept with the Testament under his pillow. ("Great readers," said Lyman Beecher, "are in danger of filling their minds with undigested facts, which they have not force enough to reduce to general principles.") Witty he could be, too, and told a story with a fine sense for the ludicrous in character and situation.

Most extraordinary of all, he was gifted with second sight. Two years earlier he had written the Semi-Colon Club an account of the apparitions that had visited him from childhood—phantoms that came by daylight and candle-light and moonlight, in thick fogs along the river bank, in company or in the dark solitude of his bedroom at night; shadowy figures of Indians and white men and little women in black and fairies and hairless devils, who

passed through walls and floors, or indescribable figures like nothing in experience; beings with whom he communed in spiritual beatitude or great funnel-shaped clouds, sickening in hue, that visited him in illness, sucking up and whirling away the friendly visions.

His background was a New England village, old Natick, Massachusetts; his father, a baker who had died when the son was six years old; three typically solitary New England women, his mother and two aunts, of whom he has left us an account that evokes his whole past:

Mother and Aunt Nabby each keep separate establishments. First Aunt Nabby gets up in the morning and examines the sink to see whether it leaks and rots the beam. She then makes a little fire, gets her little teapot of bright shining tin and puts into it a teaspoonful of black tea and so prepares her breakfast.

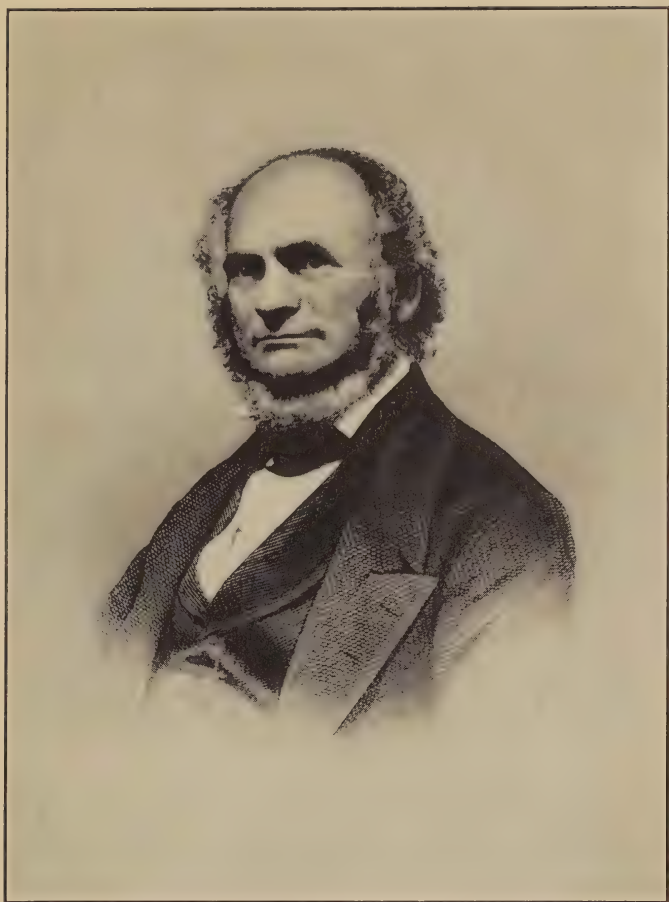
By this time Mother comes creeping downstairs, like an old tabby-cat out of the ash-hole; and she kind o' doubts and reckons whether or no she had better try to git any breakfast, bein' as she's not much appetite this mornin'; but she goes to the leg of bacon and cuts off a little slice, reckons sh'll broil it; then goes and looks at the coffee-pot and reckons sh'll have a little coffee; don't exactly know whether it's good for her, but she don't drink much. So while Aunt Nabby is sipping her tea and munching her bread and butter with a matter-of-fact certainty and marvelous satisfaction, Mother goes doubting and reckoning around . . . till you see rising up another little table in another corner of the room, with a good substantial structure of broiled ham and coffee and a boiled egg or two with various *et ceteras*, which Mrs. Diffidence, after many desponding ejaculations, finally sits down to, and in spite of all presentiments, makes them fly. . . .

I have thus far dined alternately with Mother and Aunt Susan, not having yet been admitted to Aunt Nabby's establish-

ment. Mother is very well, thin as a hatchet and smart as a steel trap; Aunt Nabby, fat and easy as usual.

Calvin Stowe had been educated at Bradford Academy and at Bowdoin College and had taught at Andover before coming to Lane. He was a Calvinist of the school of Jonathan Edwards, with leanings toward the Tyler side of the Taylor-Tyler argument, the side of the pessimists. Whether one should blame his theology, or the solitary women who made his home, or his constitution which he described as feeble from birth, although it held out for eighty years, the fact remains that he had developed a highly excitable nervous system which, at times, flared up in fits of temper and, at others, flung him into the slough of despond, and, chronically, made him unpredictable and importunate. In crises he had the habit of taking to his bed with a finality of despair that must have been peculiarly exasperating to Lyman Beecher and a burden to his wife.

So if there was little in his burly, well-fed figure or his booming voice to remind one of Lord Byron, it was obvious that he had much of the poetic temperament. That he had a rich emotional nature, who could doubt who knew his passionate devotion to Eliza. That devotion was something Harriet Beecher clung to and fostered to the end. She even encouraged his communings with Eliza's ghost when it joined his array of phantoms. Eliza plucked the strings of his guitar. If he would keep it in his room at night he might hear from her oftener. Years afterward, when for the first time Harriet had more money than she needed, she had a charming portrait painted of Eliza to hang over the sitting-room fireplace—a shrine before which she and



C. E. Stowe.

From an engraving in the Bowdoin College Library, 1850.

Professor Stowe worshiped annually, on Eliza's birthday.

In any case, on January 6, 1836, Harriet Elizabeth Beecher found herself marrying Calvin Ellis Stowe. The whole thing came off very quietly. She was puzzled by her lack of emotion. On the threshold of momentous change she felt "nothing at all!" Hardly what she had expected from love and marriage. But no doubt her own fancy, her own dreams of happiness, had led her astray quite as much as the sentimental fiction condemned by Catharine could have done.

After a brief wedding journey over corduroy roads to Columbus (primarily a business trip for the bridegroom) Harriet Beecher Stowe settled down by the fire to write to Georgiana. She is puzzled by her apathy. "I am tranquil, quiet, and happy," she writes. And in the next breath, "I look *only* on the present, and leave the future with Him who has hitherto been so kind to me . . . and my comfort is to rest on Him in whose house there are many mansions provided when these fleeting ones pass away." But at this point she breaks off, not to complete the letter for a month. "I got into a strain of emotion in it that I dreaded to return to."

What a help to the biographer had she been more explicit! Perhaps Georgiana understood. Was the "strain of emotion" a religious paroxysm? Or the reawakening of an old frustration? Or the persistent, unsatisfied craving for something to give to life beauty and meaning? Her tranquillity one suspects of being something less than ecstatic. Her home, be it noted, is still in Heaven.

Ecstasy was beyond neither dreams nor experience. As

a child she had glimpsed it in the Litchfield sunset, or dreaming of Byron among the wild strawberries, or writing *Cleon* in the room of her own. Secretly she had conceived it for the Florences and Susans of her fiction. On the banks of Niagara it had seized her, making her feel that to go over with the water would be consummation. Ecstasy was like that, a terrifying thing, in the end, that gripped and shook and flung away, gone more swiftly than it came, leaving one spent and empty, forever reaching beyond.

Yet her father could hold it. His enthusiasm burned with a steady flame. Religion had done that for him, no doubt. Religion, she believed, should fill the empty spaces in one's being, sustain and satisfy. That it brought her no more than fleeting happiness, was, she readily understood, because of her lack of resignation, because she persisted in seeking happiness shaped according to a pattern of her own.

2

In May following the wedding, Professor Stowe went to Europe on an educational mission. He was to make a survey of the Prussian school system for the State of Ohio and also to buy books for Lane Seminary. His expense account did not permit taking Mrs. Stowe and, besides, she was expecting a baby; but she went East to see him off and to visit Mary. He departed wrapped in melancholy. Before him was the long sea voyage, uncomfortable and perilous. Probably he would never return. Behind him was Eliza's

grave. Mrs. Stowe thought of his opportunities, of all the beautiful things in Europe that she had read about and longed to see and might never see, and found herself impatient.

When he had gone she returned to her father's house in Cincinnati for an interlude of leisure and serenity, one of two or three she was to know before old age brought her second childhood. For several months her time was her own. She spent some of it writing stories and having the fun of seeing them in print. Her favorite, Henry Ward, who had developed from a thick-tongued, bashful, unhappy boy into a vigorous young man with a large share of Lyman Beecher's irrepressible spirit, provided her with an outside interest. He was spending his vacation editing the *Cincinnati Journal* and allowed her to help him.

The city itself furnished excitement and editorial material. Slavery was to the fore again. Two abolitionists, James G. Birney, who had freed his slaves in Alabama, and Dr. Gamaliel Bailey of Cincinnati, set up a press to publish an abolitionist paper, the *Philanthropist*. At once the slavery interests opened fire. They marched on the offices of Birney and Bailey to demolish the press, gathering a mob in their progress—sympathizers and riff-raff, poor whites who hated freed Negroes and all of those alley cats and gutter-snipes who inevitably come slinking into the public square when a brawl is in prospect. The riot spread itself to attack the colored population in all parts of the city. Then respectable people, who had at first winked at the slavery interests because the abolitionists were radicals, took fright at the mob. The forces of law and order

were called into play and peace was restored; but Birney and Bailey were admonished against the folly of playing with fire and urged to move on.

Both Mrs. Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher believed that in resorting to violence, the slavery interests had promoted the cause of the abolitionists. Indeed, their own sympathies were aroused. Henry Ward got himself appointed deputy sheriff and went forth armed to deal with the mob. He wrote vigorous editorials for the *Cincinnati Journal* denouncing the invasion of the private rights of Messrs. Birney and Bailey, while Mrs. Stowe supplemented them with satire.

In the midst of the slavery excitement, Lyman Beecher diverted his sons and daughters by bringing home his third wife. She was a widow, Mrs. Lydia Jackson, who had been a member of his church in Boston, a suitable spouse, it seems, who, with the help of her two grown daughters, took excellent care of him in his old age.

In September, Mrs. Stowe gave birth to twin daughters. One of them should, of course, be named Eliza Tyler. When Mr. Stowe returned, in the middle of the winter, he decided that the other should be named Harriet Beecher.

3

The Stowes now set up housekeeping in earnest. It caught her unprepared. Mr. Stowe's equipment was a collection of books; Mrs. Stowe's dowry, eleven dollars' worth of dishes. Moreover, the clouds of poverty and uncertainty that had lowered over Lane Seminary from the beginning,

spread their shadow over the Stowes as a matter of course. They threatened a deluge in the unlucky year of 1837; for the financial panic ruined Lane's chief benefactor. After that, Professor Stowe's salary, small when paid, was seldom paid in full. Nor, in spite of their background, was either husband or wife endowed with Yankee thrift and good management.

Mrs. Stowe had little in common with those New England housewives of whom she liked to write, the women with "faculty," who could do all of their own work, including the spinning and weaving, and still have their afternoons to themselves. She was writing from experience when, in her fifties, she deplored:

. . . a too great tendency of the age to make the education of women anti-domestic. . . . The daughters of laborers and artisans are put through algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and the higher mathematics, to the entire neglect of that learning which belongs distinctively to woman . . . the females in our country towns are commonly, in mental culture, vastly in advance of the males of the same household; but with this comes a physical delicacy, the result of an exclusive use of the brain and a neglect of the muscular system, with great inefficiency in practical domestic duties. The race of strong, hardy, cheerful girls, that used to grow up in country places, and made the bright, neat, New England kitchens of old times . . . is daily lessening.

Yet one notes here that she is regretting higher education for the daughters of laborers and artisans, not for the daughters of ministers and the wives of professors, not for Harriet Beecher Stowe. The child of Roxana Foote not

only lacked the physique but had, indeed, no ambition to make "the bright, neat New England kitchen."

What had she hoped for from married life? Certainly there had been little in her experience to make her think that it would be easy. For all of her twenty-five years, she had had before her the example of mothers of large families, who, if not overworked—and the Beecher women, even in financial straits, seem to have had a good deal of "help"—were perpetually busy. Yet she would not have been a good American if she had not looked forward to something easier and better.

Almost any of us can guess what she wanted. If Lord Byrons were hard to come by, if she could not, after all, expect a husband to resemble the hero of a romance, she could shut away the heroic image in a secret cupboard of her mind, for use in reveries or to dress up Professor Stowe, and take satisfaction in outer circumstances. Release from teaching, the right to call her time her own; the management without too much of the labor of a comfortable home where she might welcome her friends generously and from which she might emerge to take a decorously useful place in the community. Children? To be sure, probably a number of children; to brood over them, to reshape her life in their lives. Ruskin was to sum it up, years later—the perennial prayer of the genteel women for a life of "sweet ordering" and "arrangement." Sensible Mary, it appears, had contrived for herself a life on this pattern.

Sweet ordering and arrangement by the mistress of the household called for the aid of "strong, hardy, cheerful girls," to make the kitchen bright and neat; but they were

not readily hired in Cincinnati—not, at least, at a price the Stowes could pay. While to do the ordering and arranging alone or with only ignorant, easy-going Mina to help, presupposed a degree of system and steadiness, impossible to Mrs. Stowe. To attempt to impose regularity upon herself—to determine beforehand to iron on Tuesdays, clean on Thursdays, and bake on Fridays—was to invite rebellion, to tempt her to clean on Mondays, bake on Wednesdays, and iron on Saturdays, or to run away from all of those tasks, perhaps to make herself useful in a neighbor's house, or to be purely sociable, or to wander off into reverie.

It had always been so. The spirit of play was lively within her. When necessity clamped down upon it, it was perpetually writhing, wasting much nervous energy in protest, cheating itself with dreams of escape. Perhaps if Calvin Stowe had been more beautiful to look at, more buoyant and courageous within; if he had required less imaginative dressing-up before she could make herself see him in romantic guise, the spirit of play might not only have adapted itself more readily to uncongenial tasks, but might also have found the importunities of the artistic temperament less burdensome. But, in so far as one has a right to judge from her letters, here in part is the story of the first sixteen years of her marriage: an effort at self-discipline, at facing facts and planning to deal with them; a brief interval of moderate success followed by a combat in crescendo between steadily mounting resentment, on the one hand, and the prayer for resignation, on the other; followed by nervous exhaustion and illness—neuralgia in her eyes so that she could not write or fix her attention on

anything or bear the light in her room, a "sensible distress in the brain"; followed by flight—a visit to William, a visit to Mary, a trip through the White Mountains, a sojourn of eleven months at a water cure; renewed effort at self-discipline and fact-facing followed by another period of failure and escape.

It is not a particularly heroic chronicle. It is not even a phenomenal one. America was full of young women who had discovered that married life was not the same thing as "playing ladies" and yet persisted in hoping that it might be made so.

America was full of people, too, with instincts perversely set against growing up, people who cherished the belief that life could and should be good and beautiful and exciting. Some of its greatest were in that class, those in whom the spirit of play was too vital to be put down, strong enough to get the upper hand of necessity and to bend it to its own uses. Lyman Beecher was that kind of person. Indeed, there are forms of greatness inseparable from unquenchable youth—the greatness of poets, painters, musicians, pioneers. If the spirit of play in Harriet Beecher Stowe had had one object of passionate devotion, all of the fragments of life might have come together into a beautiful pattern.

Even as it was, she did not move in a circle of frustration, but spirally, with a measure of progress. Periods of despair were of short duration. If only as a foil to Professor Stowe, she must have cultivated cheerfulness. He found her an amiable and comforting companion upon whom he became more passionately dependent with the years. "Who

else has so much talent with so little self-conceit; so much reputation with so little affectation; so much literature with so little nonsense; so much enterprise with so little extravagance; so much tongue with so little scold; so much sweetness with so little softness." Obviously, the professor was enjoying his own rhetoric, and yet he was sincere enough. For the playing spirit, having set its heart on being happy, will be gay on slight provocation, and is peculiarly gifted at making itself see people and situations as it wishes to see them. In any case, the realities of her marriage gave her imagination sufficient material upon which to build a belief in its sanctity that held out for fifty years.

4

But in the summer of 1837, the twins, Mr. Stowe, the housework, the bills, the Cincinnati climate, hot and malarious, had overwhelmed her. And there was to be another baby.

To be sure she was better off than Henry Ward's bride, Unice Bullard, who had just gone to housekeeping on a salary of four hundred dollars a year, over a livery-stable in Lawrenceburg, Ohio, a miserable patch of a town. But thinking of Unice and Henry did not make her feel happier. Anyway, Henry was Henry. He did not go to bed in crises, but attacked his problems with the zest of a man who enjoys problems, full of self-confidence. He carried one with him. Faith and devotion to a cause, they were what kept Henry going. Faith and a cause were what she needed, also, and resignation. She might at least be re-

signed and trust the Lord to take care of her family and to pay their bills.

For the moment, however, she could be resigned to her situation only by getting out of it. On the verge of nervous collapse, she went off for a long visit with William and his wife in Putnam, Ohio. The William Beechers were struggling along on a pittance, too, with a country church and school; but they had a cause. Anti-slavery. All of the Beechers, indeed, had been aroused to a more active interest in the subject by Edward's recent experience. He had been the friend who helped Elijah P. Lovejoy land his anti-slavery press at Alton, Illinois, and had escaped being shot with him by leaving town the night before the shooting took place. The family in Putnam talked anti-slavery and read Dr. Bailey's *Philanthropist*. So Mrs. Stowe read it, also, and found an outlet for personal despair in despair over the system of slavery. No one could have it brought before him without an irrepressible desire to do something; but what was there to do?

Eventually she came home to her own problems. In January, 1838, her third child, Henry, was born. Something definite had to be done about the housework and the bills. Boarders! The families of ministers and professors always kept boarders. Mrs. Stowe had grown up with them. One could not possibly want them, but one had them, just the same, filling up those extra spaces where one might otherwise have spread one's self or found a little privacy, destroying the intimacy of family meal-times, intruding upon family councils, adding to the housework burden.

But Mrs. Stowe had at her command other means of earning money, as her sister Catharine and Professor Stowe had already pointed out. She could write stories and sell them, what was more, at two dollars a page, a page she could write in fifteen minutes. Ridiculous to spend her time hovering over Mina in the kitchen or dusting and sweeping or nursing babies, when money to pay others to do these things was so easily come by. Catharine was insistent. She dragged Harriet away from her housekeeping and made her finish her stories. She wrote letters to successful literary friends—Mrs. Lydia Huntley Sigourney, “Sweet Singer of Hartford,” for example—asking their help in finding additional markets.

Kind of Catharine to go on taking so much interest, looking after Harriet as she had always done. Unusual, also that a husband so widely read, so learned as Professor Stowe, should have so much sympathy for his wife’s scribbling. He was helpful, too, let her read her stories to him, made criticisms, provided information and material, interviewed publishers and kept an eye on contracts. Mrs. Stowe assured herself that she was fortunate and grateful.

Even to herself she would not have admitted that she resented them both; that she resented the persistence of Catharine’s domination, something from which marriage should have released her, and her husband’s assumption that since she had talent it might as well be turned to profit for the family. Supporting the family was, after all, his job. That was the tradition that American men had themselves built up. For her part, she did not ask much, just to be allowed to run her house in her own way and to

bring up her children—she loved taking care of her children—without being harassed and overworked and worried. She had no personal ambition, had not dreamed of fame. Nearly everything she had written had been published under Catharine's name. Her attitude toward literature was much like that of Margaret Junkin Preston who boasted of having never neglected a pudding for a poem nor a sauce for a sonnet.

Nor did the rest of the household take her writing seriously enough to leave her undisturbed in the midst of it. She could write anywhere—on the kitchen table, if need be, amid the clatter of meal-getting with soot dropping on her from the stove, or in the nursery while the babies were being washed and dressed and kept out of mischief. The parlor was sacred to the studies of Professor Stowe who was annoyed by intrusions.

To write "pieces" for the Semi-Colon Club or to make a little spending money, at leisure and when one was in the mood for putting reveries on paper, had been a pleasure. To have to grind out stories—a page in fifteen minutes at two dollars a page—in the midst of household disturbances or at the end of a day of them, in order to pay the cook or to buy a feather bed or a carpet, was another matter.

And what did one write about? Anything that came to mind, anything one talked about.

The servant problem. There was no servant class in America. The well-trained and competent were always moving on to something better, so that American housewives were always either changing servants or struggling

with the incompetent. "What shall we do? Shall we give up houses, have no furniture to take care of, keep merely a bag of meal, a porridge pot, and a pudding stick, and sit in our tent door in real patriarchal independence? What shall we do?"

A temperance tract. Fashionable people needed reminding that wine at dinner often proved fatal to weaker brethren and that their policy of letting every man mind his own business was not the way of a Christian. No Beecher would subscribe to it.

A night on a canal boat, her own experience, an interesting bit of Americana.

The thoughtless selfishness of well-to-do women who economize on the wages of seamstresses.

An explanation of how thick-tongued, unlucky Henry Ward was turning out to be the most eloquent and fortunate of all the Beechers.

Sabbath keeping. Cincinnati of the 1840's was a far cry, in that respect, from Litchfield of the 1820's. To be sure, the old-time, Hebraic, Puritan Sabbath was no longer supportable. But the careless habits of her neighbors, their way of sleeping late on Sunday mornings and shooing the children off to Sunday School unprepared, their total neglect of Sunday observances themselves, were deplorable. The Sabbath should be kept; it should be thoughtfully prepared for by young and old; it should be wholly dedicated to things of the spirit; but it should be happy. Happiness, true happiness, was the essence of true religion.

Once or twice, in moments of relaxation, she turned back to sketch a New England character, after the manner

of *Uncle Tim*—old Father Morris for example, who made the Bible live again in the New England village. “The road to Emmaus is a New England turnpike; you can see its mile stones, its mullein stalks, its toll gates.” Martha and Mary lived in “a little white house among the trees” and Martha was “cumbered with much serving around the house, frying fritters and making gingerbread.”

By and by, in the year 1842, the “pieces” had accumulated to such an extent that she would cull those she liked best and make a book. It should be called *The Mayflower* because of the New England character of the writer. The Harpers would publish it, on very low terms, to be sure; but she would earn a little.

Catharine Beecher wrote an introduction defending fiction as practised by Harriet, “a mind trained from childhood under her care”—fiction with a moral and religious purpose—with a parenthetical comment on the ways of Charles Dickens. She praised:

. . . the vivid delineation of character and scenes in his writings, their democratic tendency, the kindliness of heart . . . the pleasing vein of humor . . . and their comparative freedom from what is licentious and unprincipled. . . . But what false views of human nature . . . as if such pure, elevated, refined characters could grow up under the most baleful influences. . . . And what a low standard of virtue. . . . As if the truths and hopes of religion had nothing to do with virtue, or morality, or noble and refined sentiment. And what sad familiarity is induced with the most depraved, the most degraded, and the most vulgar of mankind! And with what careless and mirthful levity are the crimes and vices of our fellow creatures held up to view!

Mrs. Stowe's negotiations with the Harpers for the publication of *The Mayflower* took place while she was visiting Mary in Hartford, during one of her periods of flight. At the same time, she interviewed "Johnson of the *Evangelist*" who would pay her for whatever she wrote for him and "Hale, Jr." of the *Boston Miscellany*, who would pay her, not two dollars a page, but *twenty dollars for three pages*. Could he be trusted? ¹ In Cincinnati Professor Stowe was consulting with the editor of the *Souvenir*, a little magazine through which his wife should "form the mind of the West for the coming generation."

Her work was assuming a professional aspect. Professor Stowe was impressed:

God has written it in his book that you must be a literary woman, and who are we that we should contend against God? You must therefore make all your calculations to spend the rest of your life with your pen. . . . Get a good stock of health and brush up your mind. Drop the E. out of your name. It only incumbers it and interferes with the flow and euphony. Write yourself fully and always Harriet Beecher Stowe, which is a name euphonious, flowing, and full of meaning. Then my word for it, your husband will lift up his head in the gate, and your children will rise up and call you blessed.

Mrs. Stowe was somewhat impressed herself. It seemed clear that if she chose to be a "literary lady," she could be. On the strength of her prospects, she issued a declaration of independence. If she was to make a business of writing, she must have a room to herself, a room "that shall be *my*

¹ Despite the twenty dollars for three pages, Mrs. Stowe declined to contribute to the *Boston Miscellany*, because, according to Edward Everett Hale, she was shocked by a décolletée figure among the fashion plates.

room," a room formerly occupied by a boarder, where among her ferns and ivy and begonias—to the end of her days she loved puttering over plants—she could write for hours undisturbed. She would be systematic about it. She would even be systematic about her children. They should be relegated to an upstairs nursery, except for a fixed period each day, which she would devote to them in her study.

At this point enthusiasm for a career waned. Her children—there were four in 1842, frail, nervous, and excitable—needed her undivided attention. They were her reason for living. Except for them life was not alluring. Her mind was weary and darkened with cares already, and the prospect of a future spent with her pen was dreary and burdensome. Any one as thoroughly tired as she was could not live much longer, in any case, and wasn't it her duty to devote such time as remained to shaping the character of her children?

Just so! A passion for music or painting or poetry can integrate a man's life. A woman will always prefer that hers shall be deflected by the puddings and sauces of her relations to other people.

None the less her reputation grew apace, to such an extent that, some five years later, to her surprise and amusement, she was asked to contribute a biography and a daguerreotype of herself to a volume of lives of distinguished women. Indeed, during the 1840's, her name must have been thoroughly familiar to the thousands of readers of Godey's *Lady's Book*. The columns of the *New York Evangelist*, also, contain not only religious and didactic

stories, afterward published in a second edition of *The Mayflower* (1855), but frequent articles on such subjects as the interior life, the education of women, DeWitt's edition of Luther's letters; while in 1844, it advertises "A new uniform edition of the works of Charlotte Elizabeth (Mrs. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna) with an introduction by Harriet Beecher Stowe."

5

In the *New York Evangelist* for January 2, 1845, she has a story, "Immediate Emancipation," which tells of a slave who, as a personal servant, is brought by his master to Cincinnati. There, taking advantage of the rights conferred upon him by being on free soil, the Negro undertakes to secure his freedom. The master, who has always been fond of his servant and treated him well, is amazed at such ingratitude. But the slave points out that, although he has been happy in his master's service and is personally attached to him, still, as long as he is a slave, he must be perpetually haunted by the fear of being "sold down the river" to pay his master's debts or to settle his estate. This was an aspect of slavery that had troubled Mrs. Stowe since her first visit to Kentucky, and that had been frequently impressed upon her by subsequent contacts with slaves. Her story was intended, also, to answer those who argued that well-treated slaves preferred slavery to freedom.

In September of the same year, Professor Stowe spoke on slavery to the American Board of Foreign Missions, meeting at Worcester, Massachusetts. Slavery, he said, was

a social rather than an individual sin, and, as such, should not exclude slave owners from the communion of the church. He favored gradual emancipation and added that one of the best ways of promoting it was by aiding the escaped slave on his road to freedom.

This was a method of which he had had some experience. On one occasion, a stormy night six years earlier, he and Charles Beecher had harnessed the old Beecher carry-all and carried away the Stowes' servant, Mina, through the mud and over the logs of a corduroy road and across a swollen stream, some ten miles to the home of a Quaker, John Van Zandt, who had worked out a system for hiding fugitives. Mina was free by the laws of Ohio, but could not trust any law to save her from the master who was seeking her out—a creature just enough removed from “poor white trash” by avarice, pugnacity, and cunning, to have laid hands upon a little property, who avenged himself for the scorn of society by abusing those who fell into his power. On his place, poor Mina had never heard of Jesus Christ!

“Time would fail to tell you all that I learned incidentally of the slave system in the history of various slaves who came into my family, and of the underground railroad which, I may say, ran through our house,” wrote Mrs. Stowe in a letter to Mrs. Follen, years afterward. The whole letter, written during the pardonable excitement of awaking to fame, bubbles over to such an extent that one may be inclined to question—as some have done—the number of times that the Stowe house was actually shaken by the passage of trains on the underground railroad. Still

we have no right to doubt that the Stowes were willing to shelter fugitives or to dispute Mrs. Stowe when she says that, at one time, they slept with firearms and a large bell at hand, to call the Lane Students in case a mob from the city came to search their house.

The Seminary itself was an object of suspicion and hostility to slavery interests in Cincinnati; for after the departure of Theodore Weld and his anti-slavery society, Dr. Beecher had again allowed it to harbor anti-slavery enthusiasts. Moreover, a small colored settlement had grown up on property leased by the Seminary—to help pay its bills, no doubt. The women of the settlement fell naturally into the way of earning their living by working for the professors' wives, among them Mrs. Stowe. Her interest in them was sufficient to impel her to make up to them for the lack of a colored school by teaching some of their children herself. Education was, of course, a vital part of the program of those who favored gradual emancipation.

The playing spirit had, indeed, a ready sympathy for colored people. Their easy-going, kindly natures, their drollery, their love of fun, their quick response to comedy wherever met, delighted her. So did the piety and goodness of some of them. She could never forget the religious husband of one of her servants, a man free to go and come between Kentucky and Ohio on business for his master, whose conscience kept him in slavery to the man who, year by year, put off giving him the freedom he had promised to give.

Nor did the daughter of Lyman Beecher find the emotional excesses of their religious expression distasteful. Let

them jump and laugh and weep and swoon! Such behavior was the manifestation of the nearness of a primitive people to the source of life. She could well believe that they had visions and heard voices. Her cook Eliza Buck, had heard the Lord say to her, "Fear not, my little one; thy sins are forgiven thee."

Eliza had need of such comfort. Her last master had been the father of all her children! ("You know, Mrs. Stowe, slave women cannot help themselves.") Eliza had been sold into the Louisiana cotton fields from the patriarchal benevolence of a Virginia plantation where she had been reared as nurse and seamstress. The Virginia planter had fallen into debt! She had dreadful tales to tell of Louisiana, not only of hours of exhausting labor, but of floggings, of stealing out at night to dress the wounds of men and women lying maimed and lacerated on cabin floors.

Such tales and worse were told, too, by quiet Quaker women who turned up, now and then, in reading circles and sewing societies, in the Middle West; and by Charles Beecher, after a sojourn as a clerk in the office of a cotton factor in New Orleans. Charles had seen an overseer who bragged that his fist had got hard as iron from knocking down Negroes. In the *New York Evangelist* there was an account of a slave who had been flogged to death. Slaves had no family rights. Husbands and wives were sold away from each other. Women belonged to any man who bought them. Children were bred to be sold like cattle. Mrs. Stowe herself had seen a husband and wife torn apart by a slave trader on an Ohio River wharf. She had had to

beg money from her neighbors to ransom a three-year-old girl who would have been sold away from her mother. She tried to keep her mind off these things. After all, what could she do?

For all of the Beechers, the slavery issue was bound up with problems within the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. In 1838, Lyman Beecher had had to console himself for the final rupture between Old School and New School theologians by the thought that a strong, united Presbyterian church was too Papistical, anyway. The radical New School harbored abolitionists who insisted upon making slavery a religious issue and forced the conservative Old School, which was strongest in the South, to come out in defense of property rights and, sometimes, in defense of slavery itself.

The Beechers were in a peculiar position. On the one hand, they could not very well forget what Theodore Weld and the abolitionists had done to Lane Seminary. On the other, they were confronted at every turn by the hostility of the Old School, which, as late as 1847, was still trying to put their father out of the ministry. It was characteristic of Lyman Beecher that he could not only write with admiration of one of the fiercest of his Old School opponents, but that he could see in such men as William Lloyd Garrison "the fit and fearful ministers of [Jehovah's] vengeance upon a people incorrigibly wicked."

His charitable attitude was not altogether reflected by his children. Against the Old School, Harriet stored up considerable bitterness which found expression later on. It was compounded not only of animosity toward those who

had persecuted her father, but also of resentment toward a theology which she came to believe had darkened her girlhood. Catharine and Edward had fostered that belief. Henry Ward shared it. It was natural that their pragmatic faith, in which theology had been shoved aside to make room for morality and philanthropy, should concern itself with slavery, which was plainly both immoral and unphilanthropic. When members of the Old School began to defend it with quotations from Scripture, to attack slavery became for the Beechers at once a duty and a pleasure. William's anti-slavery activities were a contributing cause to his losing his pastorate in Putnam, Ohio. Edward's zeal for the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society had so crippled his efforts to build up Illinois College, by 1844, that it seemed wisest for him to leave it altogether. Henry Ward defied influential opinion to preach against slavery in Indianapolis, and continued to do so when he moved to Brooklyn.

But perhaps it was the thought of Weld and Garrison that inclined them, on the whole, to their father's more moderate views. Probably, also, they shared, to some extent, the opinion of a writer in the *New York Evangelist*, signing himself *Novanglus Occidentalis*, who, in describing the Anti-Slavery Convention held in Cincinnati, in 1845, "could not altogether relish the idea that ministers of the Gospel should be partakers in meetings where so much of the action and so large a part of the discussion are of a strongly political cast, and so many things are done which are quite aside from a minister's appropriate business. . . . But if ecclesiastical bodies will do nothing on the subject of slavery except throw the shield of their pro-

tection over it, as the last Old School Assembly did, what remains for ministers to do, who wish to be faithful on this as on all other matters?"

It would be interesting to have some record of Mrs. Stowe's thoughts about that Anti-Slavery Convention. What did she think, for instance, of that extraordinary builder of Utopias, Mme. Darusmont (Fanny Wright), who was conspicuous in anti-slavery agitation in Cincinnati, in the late forties?

We know what Catharine thought, unless she had changed her opinion since 1837. In that year she had published a pamphlet, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, with Reference to the Duty of American Females*. She began it as a personal letter to her friend, Angelina Grimké, who had written her of a projected tour of the North to urge northern women to join abolition societies; but had decided to expand the letter and to make it public. Catharine had two objections to abolitionists. In the first place, they were working in the wrong locality. In stirring up anti-slavery sentiment in the North, where the better class of people did not approve of slavery anyway, they were behaving like citizens of Boston, for example, who should endeavor to convince Boston of the wickedness of New York. The only possible result would be to increase the self-righteousness of Bostonians, to inflame the anger of New Yorkers and to widen the breach between the two cities. In the second place, Catharine denounced the violence of the abolitionists because in stirring up hatred against themselves they tended to perpetuate slavery. They should emulate the great Clarkson and Wilberforce, who

had not only done their work among the people directly concerned in the British slave trade, but had maintained an attitude of Christian charity throughout.

As for women like Fanny Wright, what Catharine thought of them can be readily inferred. She speaks of Fanny Wright as an advocate of atheism, and deplors the connection of women with all party strife. The only principles which could protect the rights of free speech, free discussion, and the liberty of the press were the maxims of peace and charity. These should be advocated by females by example and entreaty, not by thrusting themselves into public life:

Heaven has appointed to one sex the superior, and to the other, the subordinate station, and this without any reference to the character or conduct of either. It is therefore as much for the dignity, as it is for the interest of females, in all respects to conform to the duties of this relation. . . . The more intelligent a woman becomes, the more she can appreciate the wisdom of that ordinance that appointed her subordinate station, and the more her taste will conform to the graceful and dignified retirement and submission it involves. . . . A woman is to win everything by peace and love . . . the moment woman begins to feel the promptings of ambition, or the thirst for power, her ægis of defense is gone. All the sacred protection of religion, all the generous promptings of chivalry, all the poetry of romantic gallantry, depend upon woman's retaining her place as dependent and defenseless, and making no claims, and maintaining no rights but what are the gifts of honour, rectitude, and love. . . .

May not woman appropriately come forward as a suppliant for a portion of her sex who are bound in cruel bondage? It is

replied, that the rectitude and propriety of any such measure depend entirely on its probable results. If petitions from females will operate to exasperate; if they will be deemed obtrusive, indecorous, and unwise, by those to whom they are addressed; if they will increase, rather than diminish the evil which it is wished to remove; if they will be the opening wedge that will tend eventually to bring females as petitioners and partisans into every political measure that may tend to injure and oppress their sex . . . then it is neither appropriate, nor wise, nor right for a woman to petition for the relief of oppressed females.

Petitioning, Catharine believed, was the function of men. Women should persuade the men nearest them to act wisely. If a woman could not influence the men of her own household, how could she expect to influence Congress! Moreover, Catharine was concerned about securing education for women. If women were going to use their educations to make themselves obnoxious to men, she feared the thwarting of her educational endeavors.

Catharine's *Essay* is written with the dialectic thoroughness that characterized her refutation of Jonathan Edwards. However, it is unlikely that any of her arguments against petitioning females were directed at Mrs. Stowe or that the latter would have taken an active part in the Anti-Slavery Convention, no matter what her thoughts. Loyalty to the more strenuous members of her family frequently led her to champion their views; but if left to herself, she was a home-body. Her interests were individual and personal. Her personal experience with slaves was such that, for years, images evoked by the idea of slavery moved through the cellars of her mind in a turbid stream.

6

The years trudged past. Eventually came 1849. An uneventful, uninteresting procession to any one but herself. Yet they had engaged her mind and heart. In the family Bible, besides the twins and Henry, were recorded:

Frederick William, May, 1840

[Named for the King of Prussia, a hero of Professor Stowe's]

Georgiana, July, 1843

Samuel Charles, January, 1848

Brief entries, covering how much!

And there were other things she remembered that had seemed important when they happened. Famine in Cincinnati that year when the Ohio River was closed to navigation. For weeks they had lived on flour and pork. An epidemic of typhoid fever at Lane Seminary. The Beecher women had turned themselves into nurses and their father's house into a hospital. And cholera, a recurrent menace. She had nearly died of it herself; but Mary had nursed her through it while Lyman Beecher prayed over her in the sultry August night buzzing with mosquitoes. It had sapped her endurance. Afterward, Catharine and Mary had carried her off to Brattleboro, Vermont, to Dr. Wesselhoeft's water cure, a fantastic regimen of "wave baths" and "sitz-baths" and douches. Not for eleven months could she face her burdens. In the meantime, Professor Stowe, left to himself, had succumbed to depression and, a year later, had gone in turn to Dr. Wesselhoeft's.

If ever Mrs. Stowe's immediate household had settled into routine, the Beecher family had given her plenty to think about. Her father's trip to England, in 1846, to attend a convention of the Christian Alliance, was a high point in family history. He had spoken on temperance before a huge audience in Covent Garden Theatre, where the Queen had heard him, and had made other addresses in various parts of the British Isles, including one on the history of the abolition movement in America.

Nearly all of the Beechers were militant over something. Even Isabella, the youngest daughter, delving into her husband's *Blackstone*, in Hartford, and ignoring Catharine's precepts regarding female decorum, was growing bellicose about the injustice of woman's position before the law. While the doughty Catharine, somewhat ignoring her own precepts and still bent upon putting education into the hands of women, was traveling back and forth through the Middle West and into New England, as well, writing speeches for gentlemen to deliver and delivering them herself when no gentlemen were present; writing pamphlets urging women to save themselves, their children, and their country by taking education into their own hands; writing books on domestic science, on health and happiness, on morals, on religion. *Common Sense Applied to Religion or The Bible and the People!* What a forecast of religious thinking in middle-class America that was, albeit a red flag to hidebound orthodoxy in her generation!

Religion concerned all of them. Even the two youngest—Thomas absorbed in mechanics and teaching school in Hartford and James sailing the Indian Ocean—felt the

pull of their father's prayers that they enter the ministry. Eventually all did; but already in 1849, William was preaching in Batavia, New York, Edward in Boston, Henry Ward in Brooklyn, and Charles in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Temperamental George, too, had had a church in Rochester, but had shot himself in his garden trying to scare the birds from his fruit trees.

Charles was a recent recruit enlisted by Henry Ward and represented the ultimate in Protestantism. "The Bible a Sufficient Creed" was the title of his first sermon in the Fort Wayne church. Henry Ward, taking a leaf from his father's experience, had resolved to do lip service to orthodox theology when necessary. Theology was unimportant, in any case. The way to save souls was by putting down drunkenness, gambling, prostitution. Henry did not intend to have his usefulness in this field hampered by Old School theologians. Better to agree with your enemy when you met him in the way and then proceed on your own business. But Charles was intellectual. Ideas had always troubled him. Jonathan Edwards's ideas had, for many years, kept him out of the church altogether. A creed was essential to him. The creed which he evolved for himself from the Bible with the help of his brothers, Henry and Edward, eventually put him out of the Presbyterian Church. But if the theologians exiled him, his congregation, be it noted, followed him into exile. What cared they for theological authority? They knew a good man when they saw one. Besides, he was a symbol of their own right to think what they pleased. He was something of a poet and mystic, too, whose pictures of the Virgin and her son

and whose searchings out of the places of the spirit, the mist-shrouded sea of its preincarnation, the uncharted, sourceless light of Eternity, appeased their own subconscious groping.

Charles was a favorite of Harriet's, especially in her old age. She warmed to him for the same reasons that his congregation did. The middle-class demanded practical morality and philanthropy. Protestants demanded freedom. Americans whom necessity had made utilitarian demanded a vicarious satisfaction for suppressed poetry and unsatisfied emotion.

7

In her own difficulties Mrs. Stowe had sought the consolation of religion as she had been taught to do. She had conned the Bible in order to think through her creed. One spring, when Thomas was on the verge of conversion she had written it out for him:

God made man to be happy—not by himself, but happy only in a deep, absorbing, sympathizing union with his Maker; such a union as makes His will the soul's will, His joy the soul's joy, His aversion the soul's aversion. Now if He made the soul expressly to exist in this way, and *no other*, so far as the soul tries to live in any other it is going against the laws of its being.

But she was not at peace in her religion. Of such resignation as she describes she had but fleeting experience. It was an ideal not a reality. Her letter to Thomas continues:

. . . Man—you—I—we all have a desperate determination to live an independent life, by our own will, impulse, and choice,

apart from God; hence the eternal wound, forever bleeding, over which we draw the robe of outward things; hence involuntary fear, perplexity, doubt, remorse, uncertainty, and endless conflict, flashes of truth, fragments of effort, yearnings of desire unutterable, untold.

. . . there is a deep meaning in the word eternal death. . . . I had it *in* me. I also know what eternal life is; it is begun in me.

George's sudden death had shaken her soul:

. . . like an earthquake. . . . The winter after . . . I . . . was haunted and pursued by care and anxiety. . . . A feeble, sickly child—a passionate, irritable nurse, with whom I feared to leave it, from whom I feared to withdraw it—slowly withering in my arms . . . I felt alone, unsupported . . . I often saw, as by a dart of sunlight, that an entire *IDENTITY* of my will with God's would remove all disquiet, and give joy even to suffering. . . . Well, then I thought . . . why don't you have it? Just submit—give up all these separate interests—unite your soul to him in a common interest—why not? Why not? ah! Why not? Words of deep meaning to anyone who tries that vain experiment?

In this state of mind she had gone to visit Henry, hoping that relief from care would restore cheerfulness:

But now my soul seemed all to collapse; the imperious sense of *want* receded, and only a complaining, dissatisfied undertone remained. On my return this winter, again the wave of dissatisfaction rose.

In conclusion she writes:

When self-despair was final, and I merely undertook at the word of Christ, then *came* the long-expected and wished help. . . . The will of Christ seems to me the steady pulse of my being, and I go because I can not help it.

Here is the old Calvinistic distinction, so hair-splitting to us but psychologically real enough, between the self-conscious effort to help yourself to be resigned, on the one hand, and genuine self-resignation, on the other. No doubt Thomas understood. And yet it is a question to what extent any Beecher was capable of completely resigning himself. We have no reason to doubt that Harriet was doing her conscientious best. Yet two weeks after her letter to Thomas ending on so high a note, she writes to her husband thus:

It is a dark, sloppy, rainy, muddy, disagreeable day. . . . I am sick of the smell of sour milk, and sour meat, and sour everything, and then the clothes *will* not dry, and no wet thing does, and everything smells mouldy; and altogether I feel as if I never wanted to eat again. . . . As to my health, it gives me very little solicitude, although it is bad enough and daily growing worse. . . . I suffer with sensible distress in the brain . . . which some days takes from me all power of planning or executing anything; and you know that except this poor head, my unfortunate household has no mainspring, for nobody feels any kind of responsibility to do a thing in time, place, or manner, except as I oversee it.

Georgiana is so excessively weak, nervous, cross and fretful, night and day, that she takes all Anna's strength and time with her; and then the children are, like other little sons and daughters of Adam, full of all kinds of absurdity and folly.

When the brain gives out, as mine often does, and one cannot think or remember anything, then what is to be done? All common fatigue, sickness, and exhaustion is nothing to this distress.

Then she remembers that she is resigned and continues:

God, the mighty God, is mine, of that I am sure, and I know that though flesh and heart fail, I am all the while desiring and trying for his will alone.

But she has arrived at the depression point of one of her cycles and is poised for flight:

As to a journey, I need not ask a physician to see that it is needful to me as far as health is concerned . . . but I feel no particular choice about it. If God wills I go. He can easily find means. Money, I suppose, is as plenty with Him now as it always has been, and if He sees it is really best He will doubtless help me.

Ironical! Amusing, if you choose to be amused. Tragic. Perhaps God found it pathetic; for money for the journey was provided.

But no journey could help her to escape the calamity that befell in the summer of 1849. Cholera stalked the streets of Cincinnati in virulent form and carried off her baby, Charles. Her account of it in letters to Professor Stowe who was still at Dr. Wesselhoeft's in Brattleboro, is dramatic, despite prolixity:

June 29. This week has been unusually fatal. . . . Hearse drivers have scarce been allowed to unharness their horses, while furniture carts and common vehicles are often employed for the removal of the dead. . . . On Tuesday one hundred and sixteen deaths . . . and that night the air was of that peculiarly oppressive, deathly kind that seems to lie like lead on the brain and soul. . . .

July 4. All well. . . . There is more or less sickness about us, but no very dangerous cases. One hundred and twenty burials from cholera alone yesterday, yet today we see parties bent on pleasure or senseless carousing, while tomorrow and

next day will witness a fresh harvest of death from them. . . .

July 10. Yesterday little Charley was taken ill, not seriously, and at any other season I should not be alarmed. . . .

July 12. Yesterday I carried Charley to Dr. Pulte, who spoke in such a manner as discouraged and frightened me. . . . About one o'clock this morning Miss Stewart suddenly opened my door, crying, "Mrs. Stowe, Henry is vomiting!" He was, however, in a few minutes relieved. Charley . . . is evidently getting better, and is auspiciously cross. . . . Anna and I have said to each other exultingly a score of times, "How cross the little fellow is! How he does scold! . . ."

July 17. Yesterday morning our poor little dog, Daisy . . . was suddenly seized with frightful spasms, and died in half an hour. . . . While we were all mourning over her the news came that Aunt Frankie (the colored laundress) was breathing her last. Hatty, Eliza, Anna, and I made her shroud yesterday, and this morning I made her cap. We have just come from her grave.

July 23. At last, my dear, the hand of the Lord hath touched us. We have been watching all day by the dying bed of little Charley. . . .

July 26. At last it is over, and our dear little one is gone from us. . . . My Charley—my beautiful, loving gladsome baby, so loving, so sweet, so full of life and hope and strength—now lies shrouded, pale and cold in the room below. . . . He has been my pride and joy. Many a heartache has he cured for me. Many an anxious night have I held him to my bosom and felt the sorrow and loneliness pass out of me with the touch of his little warm hands. Yet I have just seen him in his death agony, looked on his imploring face when I could not help nor soothe nor do one thing, not one, to mitigate his cruel suffering, do nothing but pray in my anguish that he might die soon. I write as though there were no sorrow like my sorrow, yet there has been in this city, as in the land of Egypt, scarce a house without its dead.

Impossible to run away! Useless to protest! But thank God for the Beecher volubility!—for the gift of words!—for the power to pour them forth on paper! Afterward, as she brooded over her loss, seeking reasons as one must, what strange answers came to the surface of her mind out of the human past? Four years later she could write, “I felt that I could never be consoled for it unless this crushing of my own heart might enable me to work out some great good to others.” An interpretation of what lay between, of the miracle of release that words had wrought. But in the meantime, what ancient ideas of deity, of sacrifice, of propitiation, of atonement? “The hand of the Lord hath touched us.”

8

Their days in Cincinnati were coming rapidly to an end. Professor Stowe had had enough of it. His health was poor and, if he stayed longer, either the summer’s cholera or the winter’s smallpox would make an end of him. He felt that he had done his duty by Lane Seminary, which was beginning to prosper, and was free to accept offers from the East. As soon as Lane could fill his place he would go to Brunswick, Maine, to be the Collins Professor of Natural and Revealed Religion at Bowdoin College, his alma mater, where at the beginning of his career he had been librarian. In the meantime, Mrs. Stowe could go before him and establish the household.

It was hard to leave her father. He was seventy-five, now, soon to retire and leave Cincinnati for the East, himself.

We like to remember Thomas's picture of him in his last years in Walnut Hills, perennially resolving to put himself and his papers in order, only to create greater chaos; sitting at the desk in his study deep in theological argument, but with the door open into the grove without and ears alert for the whirl of wild pigeons above the beeches.

Otherwise, Mrs. Stowe seems to have left Cincinnati without regret, glad of a change, no doubt, and to have made the first part of the trip in good spirits. Yet what a trip! It was planned with an eye to visiting friends and relatives. Three of her five children went with her. Another was in her womb. They traveled by boat to Pittsburgh; then by canal to Jacktown, Pennsylvania, where, at two o'clock in the morning, they were routed out to take the train for Philadelphia. There, after thirteen hours of riding, a fourth change to the "boat and train line" for New York, to arrive at eleven o'clock at night with more riding ahead of them to Henry Ward's in Brooklyn. But they had enjoyed the experience! The Alleghenies which eighteen years earlier had been all but invisible to her homesick eyes, were transformed by turning her face New Englandward into "some of the finest scenery in our country," educational for the children. Her spirits were still further enlivened by Henry's prosperity. His congregation had increased his salary to thirty-three hundred dollars and given him a horse and carriage worth six hundred.

From Brooklyn she went to visit Mary and Isabella in Hartford; thence to Edward in Boston. At this point family cares returned. There were bedsteads and chairs and tables to be bought and packed and shipped with only one

hundred and fifty dollars to cover the expense; the ordeal of settling in a strange place and taking up again the burdens of a householder was impending; and Professor Stowe began writing despondent letters. For him the future was black with menace, as it is prone to be for apprehensive people on the verge of change. "Hattie" lightly flitting from relative to relative and buying new furniture, must be growing frivolous. His health was poor, his living arrangements unsatisfactory and expensive, he couldn't pay their bills, and if he should die suddenly Hattie and the children would land in the poorhouse.

She wrote reminding him that he might expect extra money from one of her publishers and that, in any case, the Lord would provide. "He who helped poor timid Jacob through all his fears and apprehensions . . . will help us, and his arms are about us, so that we shall not sink, my dear husband."

But it came upon her and she pointed out to him that, after all, she had had a hard journey. Her condition, the children, the trunks, the tickets, the crowds she had pushed through, the hackmen she had haggled with, the long rides, the snorting engines, the coal dust! And all with no arm to lean upon but the Lord's!

Late in May, 1850, some six weeks after leaving Cincinnati, she reached Maine. In Brunswick, they still tell the story of how a certain Professor Smith, sent by the President of Bowdoin to meet Mrs. Stowe on the steamer at Bath, returned without her. She had not arrived—only "an old Irish woman with a lot of brats." A legend, perhaps, yet she must have been a tired, shabby, little person, look-

ing considerably more than her thirty-nine years. A "northeaster" was blowing and kept it up for a week.

But if Professor Smith was a snob, the wife of Professor Thomas Upham was not. She welcomed the bedraggled family to a home which Mrs. Stowe described as "a beautiful exemplification of religion." Professor Upham was the author of a book on *The Interior Life* which five years earlier had comforted Mrs. Stowe so much that she had written two discussions of it for the *New York Evangelist*. His home was naturally of special interest. Mrs. Upham's portrait painted by Gilbert Stuart in her girlhood, hangs in the Bowdoin art gallery and repays a visit—a serenely charming person who by her very kindness must have given the weary traveler a heartache for all the gracious things that life had withheld.

Perhaps, too, Mrs. Upham's well-ordered house was a factor in Mrs. Stowe's dissatisfaction with the one that had fallen to her own lot—such a good, four-square, old New England house, it seems to us, with a perfect set of Sandwich glass in its excellent doorway. But it was cold and damp and musty from being shut up, full of the dismal disorder of unpacking, and waterless. However, if surroundings discouraged her, she took pleasure in her own resourcefulness; her skill at contriving sofas out of packing-boxes and chairs out of barrels; her ingenuity at having hogsheads, too large to come through the doorways, taken apart and set up again in her cellar for cisterns; her diplomacy at wangling a kitchen sink from the landlord.

And she enjoyed the landlord himself. It was good to be back among the Yankee personalities, of whom Mr. Tit-

comb was one—a carpenter, painter, upholsterer, tin-smith, locksmith, glazier, and plumber, by turns, connected by birth with Brunswick's best families, who boarded himself in his old curiosity shop on crackers and herring, read learned books, and refused to be hurried. Excellent material for a story. She practised writing about him in a letter to George Beecher's widow.

But the job of unpacking and setting her house to rights and getting herself back into domestic harness was full of vexatious details familiar to every woman who has tried it. New furniture broken in shipping and scarred in uncrating; old furniture shabby and ill-at-ease in a strange house; people hired to help, clumsy and full of questions; children fractious and off schedule; and, no matter what the confusion, the inescapable three meals a day.

She contrasted her irritability, restlessness, and discouragement under such minor trials with Mrs. Upham's serenity, and, for that matter, with her own patient acceptance of the loss of her baby. Why was it that one could meet major disasters with fortitude, only to go to pieces over broken dishes and quarrelsome children? No doubt because in disaster one recognized the hand of God. If one could but see His hand equally in petty annoyances, could feel that "there is not one of the smallest of life's troubles that has not been permitted by Him . . . for specific good purpose to the soul," then life might be "redeemed from drudgery and dreary emptiness, and made full of interest . . . and divine significance."

Having thought this problem through for herself in the midst of house-settling, she made an essay of it, *Earthly*

Care a Heavenly Discipline, which, judging by its popularity among her contemporaries, must have answered questions troubling them also.

Before the house was well in order, Professor Stowe arrived from Cincinnati for the summer vacation. In July, her seventh child was born and named Charles for the baby who had died, as was a custom of the times.

When she had recovered, Brunswick seemed a pleasant place; the dear New England people, kind and congenial. And there was the sea. She had had little experience of it—mere glimpses of Long Island Sound on her visits to Guilford. But at Brunswick the shore stretched long, narrow fingers into Casco Bay—strips of rock and sandy waste and thickets of pointed fir. Along one of these the Stowes could drive in summer, past fishermen's bleached cottages crouching mute and solitary in the thin dry grasses, past silver fingers of the bay groping stealthily among white sand and black firs, with vistas of the open sea, to the village of Harpswell on the point.

Here the children could play among the drying nets and lobster pots on the rickety wharves or fish for cunners or beg a sail with the fishermen. And Mrs. Stowe could lie on the rocks in the sun listening to the gulls that screamed and circled and swooped about the rocky island beyond, listening to the sea.

Or she could visit among the villagers or the more isolated people of Orr's Island across Harpswell Sound. There was Captain Kittridge who had given up the sea to build ships, but still nourished a sea-faring imagination that alarmed his literal-minded, God-fearing wife. And

there were two elderly spinsters, Roxy and Ruey Tooth-acher whose counterpart was to be found in every New England village; women who because they were intelligent and capable and had no lives of their own, had become indispensable in the lives of all the others; helping to bring them into the world and to lay them out for burial; making christening robes and wedding finery and shrouds. Factotums at feasts, they were, and mourners at funerals, house cleaners, cooks, nurses, and confidantes, "always chippering and chatting to each other like a pair of antiquated house-sparrows." Miss Roxy was "vigorous, spicy, and decided." Miss Ruey clipped the poetry from newspapers and accumulated it in her reticule. And there was the humble, well-ordered life of Zephaniah Pennel and his wife Mary, whose natural piety made Mrs. Stowe homesick for the early Puritans. All of these she treasured in her memory.

Fall came on. Professor Stowe returned to Cincinnati; the children, to school. Mrs. Stowe found time to teach an hour a day, to read *The Abbot* and *Kenilworth* to the children of evenings, and to make a drawing for Mrs. Upham. She had inherited Roxana's taste and facility for painting birds and flowers and bits of landscape.

Then winter closed them in. Snow drifted high in the roads of Brunswick. Their old house rocked and moaned in the northeast wind. Their air-tight stoves over-heated their heads and left their hands and feet numb with cold. The open fire in the parlor warmed only their faces. Mrs. Stowe moved about from room to room seeking a place where she could write in comfort. For write she must.

Their expenses for the year would come to two or three hundred dollars more than the professor's salary. Her bedroom was too cold. In the parlor there was the sound either of the children in the school-room overhead, or of the twins practicing on the piano in the dining-room next door. Still the parlor, with the open fire and with Great-grandfather General Ward's good drop-leaf table, which she had inherited, to write upon, was the best place.

» IV »

EMANCIPATION



THE HOUSE IN BRUNSWICK, MAINE, IN
WHICH "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN" WAS
WRITTEN

I

MRS. STOWE had a new subject. The drama of slavery was coming rapidly to a climax. On the seventh of March, 1850, Daniel Webster, remembering his passion for the Union, had risen from his seat in the Senate to abet Henry Clay in his effort to pacify the steadily rising tempers of both North and South. "Wherever there is a foot of land to be prevented from becoming slave territory, I am ready to assert the principle of the exclusion of slavery," Webster declared, but added, a moment later, "Every member of every Northern legislature is bound by oath, like every other officer of the country, to support the Constitution of the United States, and the article of the Constitution which says to these States that they shall deliver up fugitives from service, is as binding in honor and conscience as any other article."

In September, as a result of his eloquence, the fateful

Omnibus Bill had been passed. To maintain the balance of power between slave states and free states, California was admitted as a free state; Utah and New Mexico were organized as territories with the question of slavery left open; the slave state of Texas was compensated in money for territory lost to New Mexico; the slave trade, but not slavery, was abolished in the District of Columbia; and Federal officers were deputed to aid in the seizure and return of fugitive slaves to their owners.

The law providing for the return of fugitives was, in itself, enough to end all hope of peace. A particularly harsh measure which imposed penalties for aiding fugitives, allowed the master or his agent to claim a slave after a formal hearing before a Federal commissioner, and denied the slave himself the right not only of trial by jury but of giving evidence in his own defense, it served, like most harsh measures, merely to aggravate the condition it was intended to suppress. The injustice of it, its potential menace to the rights of free people, brought luke-warm anti-slavery sentiment to the boiling point; while the effort to prevent and punish their activities enraged the zealous to the doubling of their zeal.

Denunciations of Webster's treachery were on the tongues of Henry Ward and his followers, when Mrs. Stowe visited Brooklyn on the way to Maine. They were quoting Whittier:

So fallen, so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

A year earlier, Henry had developed a novel kind of anti-slavery propaganda. When his attention was drawn to a slave seeking freedom, he brought the slave into the pulpit of Plymouth Church, on Sunday morning, and raised the ransom money, then and there. As for Webster and Clay's fugitive slave law, Henry declared that religion and humanity were a price too dear to pay even for the Union.

In Boston, the Edward Beechers also had interested themselves in colored people, helping fugitives to earn a living or to escape into Canada, raising money to ransom others. In Cincinnati, Mrs. Stowe had known from experience that a fugitive was something much more human than a little newspaper advertisement, picturing a man with a stick and a bundle, with "Ran away from the subscriber" under it. Edward denounced the new law from his pulpit; but "Hattie," with her facility for writing and getting into print, could, if she chose, reach a wider public. Her duty was plain.

In the summer of 1850, she sent the *National Era*, published in Washington by the same Gamaliel Bailey whose press had been mobbed in Cincinnati, a brief parable called "The Freeman's Dream." The freeman had refused shelter to a fugitive black man and his wife: "The man was not hard and his heart misgave him when he saw the worn and trembling hands stretched forth; but then he bethought him of human laws, and feared to befriend them, and set his face as a flint and bade them pass on and trouble him not." Then the freeman dreams of the Judgment Day and finds himself cast into outer darkness with others who had failed to recognize Christ in suffering humanity. "Of

late," concludes Mrs. Stowe, "there are many in this nation who seem to think that there is no standard of right and wrong higher than an act of Congress. It is humiliating to think that there are in the Church of Christ men and ministers who need to be reminded that the laws of their Master are above human laws."

This she realized was an inadequate protest. During the summer and fall of 1850, Mrs. Edward Beecher continued to exhort her. "If I could use a pen as you can, I would write something to make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is."

Mrs. Stowe, however, had no great opinion of her own eloquence. She was exhausted from moving and house-keeping and mending and teaching the children and nursing the new baby. To have to write at all was "like rowing against wind and tide." Merely to think of writing something that would measure up to Mrs. Beecher's requirements gave her a headache. Instinctively she shied away from the whole dreadful subject. Much pleasanter and easier, since she must write something, to dash off a whimsical account of her impractical husband's attempt to economize by raising a garden,¹ or a Christmas story,² or an article on social conventions.³ Later when she felt stronger, when the baby had been weaned, she would attack the problem of slavery.

In the meantime, personal grief returned to gnaw at her heart. In January, would fall the third birthday of baby

¹ "A Scholar's Adventures in the Country," *National Era*, November 7, 1850.

² "Christmas or the Good Fairy," *National Era*, December 23, 1850.

³ "Independence," *National Era*, January 30, 1851.

Charley who was dead. She found release in writing a story of the illness of a little girl,⁴ and coming upon the autobiography of Heinrich Stilling, was so comforted by his example of faith in the merciful providence of God that she wrote an account of it for the *New York Evangelist*.

But when the Omnibus Bill became law, tragic stories came to her from Boston, where the agents of slavery were ruthlessly hunting out strayed property and returning it to its alleged owners, breaking up homes, reënslaving people who had known ten years and more of freedom. The entire colored population was in panic, hundreds fleeing to Canada.

Particularly outrageous to Mrs. Stowe were the Boston clergymen who defended the seizure of fugitives on the ground that it was legal and that they were property. She remembered Aunt Mary Hubbard and echoed her: "I feel as if I should be willing to sink with it, were all this sin and misery to sink in the sea." Her father should be in Boston to set people right with his prayers for "poor, oppressed, bleeding Africa." It was a time, indeed, that called for a Martin Luther.

Her weary spirits rallied to contribute what they could. To the *New York Evangelist*, she sent an impassioned sketch, "The Two Altars, or Two Pictures in One." "The Altar of Liberty, or 1776," tells how Great-grandfather General Ward's family in Guilford gave their best blankets and comforters and woolen stockings and staked their lives for Washington at Valley Forge. "The Altar of —, or 1850," describes the seizure and sale of colored George

⁴ "The New-Year's Gift," *New York Evangelist*, January 2, 1851.

who had been a free, hard-working, prosperous man, for ten years: "Shall we describe the leave taking—the sorrowing wife, the dismayed children, the tears, the anguish, that simple, honest, kindly home, in a moment so desolate? Ah, ye who defend this because it is a law, think, for one hour, what if this that happens to your poor brother should happen to you!"

This was a beginning, but not the burning testament that must be written. Dr. Bailey egged her on with a check for one hundred dollars and a request for the best anti-slavery story she felt that she could afford to write for that sum. Still energy and inspiration lagged, benumbed by the Brunswick winter. In the meantime, she might write a judicious article for the *Era* on the capability of liberated blacks to support themselves.

2

Then one Sunday, she sat at Communion in the Brunswick church, consciously directing her thoughts, as she had been taught to do, upon the crucified Christ, a sacrifice for the sins of men. What strange tricks did her tired mind play upon her, groping out beyond her own cares into the wretchedness of the sinning world? Into what devious, underground channels did it slip away? Did it burrow into the dark theory of the Atonement, following it to some buried altar where the bones of human sacrifice lay crumbling beneath immemorial sands? Inexplicable twist of the mind of man who blames his own lust for shedding blood upon his fear of angry gods, to arrive at length at

the conception of a god who appeases himself by shedding his own blood! Did she not remember the angel who had staid the hand of Abraham when Isaac lay bound upon the altar? Yet late in life, she still saw the Atonement as incomplete. "I believe that the Lamb who stands forever 'in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain,' has everywhere his followers—those who seem sent into the world, as He was, to suffer for the redemption of others." With this philosophy she eased her own burdens. Perhaps it explained for her, also, why the God who was Love permitted men to sacrifice men upon the altars of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Certainly it gave meaning to the image that crept from among the horrors lurking in the dark corners of her memory. As the winter light fell through the long, bleak window above the pulpit upon her bowed head, her closed eyes were tortured by the sight of a black man writhing upon the dirt floor of an old shed, while above him two others cracked their lashes and a white man urged them on. Afterward, as the black man lay dying, he forgave those who had killed him and prayed for their souls: "Pity him not! Such a life and death is not for pity! Not in the riches of omnipotence is the chief glory of God; but in self-denying, suffering love! And blessed are the men whom he calls to fellowship with him, bearing their cross after him with patience. Of such it is written, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'"

Here at last was the motivation her mind had unconsciously sought. Slavery from being a question of morality and philanthropy and politics, had become a sacrament.

Who was the black man whom her imagination had thus offered up for the redemption of his race? And what had brought him to that end? She cast about in her memory for the clue, stumbling as she did so upon the never-forgotten horrors of a hundred atonements: tales told by colored people in Cincinnati, or by the Quaker women who had spread the anti-slavery gospel in "reading circles" and "sewing societies," or brought by Charles Beecher from New Orleans; tales of wives torn from their husbands and mothers from their children, of women possessed against their will, and over all the menace of the slave-driver's lash; horrors that for years had moved through the cellars of her mind in a turbid stream.

She began poring over anti-slavery literature. In Mrs. Gamaliel Bailey's anti-slavery paper for children, *A Friend of Youth*, she came upon the story of a woman who had fled with her child across the broken ice of the Ohio River, in early spring. It was early spring in Brunswick. Thaws had begun. They reminded Mrs. Stowe of the Ohio, swollen and turbulent, with great blocks of ice pitching against each other, jamming the channel where the Kentucky shore jutted outward. She could see the woman slipping and plunging from block to block, as the river heaved and rolled. Suddenly she assumed the form of the quadroon, property of Mr. So-and-So, whom Harriet Beecher had seen in the Kentucky church, many years before. She was fleeing so desperately, of course, because her child was to be sold from her to pay her master's debts.

It was to pay the master's debts that the Stowes' cook,

Eliza Buck, had been sold to the New Orleans market from a Virginia plantation. The master's debts, no doubt, explained, also, how that Christian black man came to die beneath the lash on the floor of a Louisiana shed. From his piety, one knew that he had come out of a kinder life—a place like Eliza's Virginia plantation or the Kentucky farm that Mrs. Stowe had visited. He must have been such a man as the religious husband of her servant, whose conscience had kept him in slavery when he might easily have escaped.

When mild weather made it possible to travel, Mrs. Stowe went to Boston to read in anti-slavery headquarters. She found there the lives of two escaped slaves, Lewis Clark and the Rev. Josiah Henson. Clark, who was nearly white, had made his home, for a number of years after his escape, with Mrs. Edward Beecher's family. Here was a fitting husband for the quadroon who had fled over the ice. His dramatic escape could be made to parallel hers. Moreover, he had a sister Delia whose history—she had been sold by a brutal master to the New Orleans market, and bought by a Frenchman who later freed and married her, carried her with him to the West Indies and France, and left her a fortune—could be woven into the plot of a story to give that element of romantic intricacy so dear to Victorian novelists and their public.

The Rev. Josiah Henson, also known to the Edward Beechers, was remarkable for his loyalty to a master who had threatened to sell him "down the river" after tearing up papers giving Henson his freedom, which a friend had

purchased. Subsequently, Henson had sacrificed a chance to escape in order to nurse the son of his master through an illness. Such loyalty was, of course, the fruit of his religion. He had been converted at a camp meeting by "the great and thrilling news that Jesus Christ had tasted death for every man, the bond as well as the free," and had at once gone out to preach the Gospel to his fellow-slave. Eventually, he ran away to Canada where he founded the fugitive settlement of Dawn. He too, Mrs. Stowe believed, might, when dying, have prayed for his enemies.

In the Boston Anti-Slavery rooms also, she came upon Theodore Weld's, *Slavery as It Is*, the writings of Richard H. Dana, Jr., Ingram's *Travels in the South-West*, and *The Life of Frederick Douglass*. Later she wrote to Douglass for details of life on a cotton plantation and, when writing her book, kept at hand a copy of *The Code Noir of Louisiana* and a sketch by Judge Stroud of Philadelphia, of the laws relating to slavery in different states. Not for nothing had Harriet Beecher been a schoolma'am. She believed in checking facts. If her checking was something less than perfect, the gesture, at least, was good.

Her images multiplied and ordered themselves. Once she began to write, scenes, characters, incidents, tragic, comic, pathetic, dramatic, rushed in upon her and flowed from her pen. In April she sent the opening pages of her story to Dr. Bailey of the *National Era*. Late in May, he announced it as "Uncle Tom's Cabin or the Man that Was a Thing," and on June fifth, began publishing it in weekly installments. Every week she sent him a chapter. What she had supposed would "run through several numbers"

grew and grew. Not till the following April was the tale complete.¹

3

To herself it remained forever afterward a miracle. She could never quite remember just how or when she began to write it nor account for its vitality. It seemed to grow of itself. Certainly the prosy, moral tales and humorous trifles in *The Mayflower* could have given neither Mrs. Stowe nor her readers a hint of the power that produced *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But in some of her religious articles buried in the *New York Evangelist* and never reprinted, there is an emotional intensity for which religion was the only channel vouchsafed her by her age and class. Religion had always been her outlet for unsatisfied emotion. In 1851, she had arrived at the time of life when a woman becomes aware, consciously or subconsciously, of emotions unsatisfied that must remain so; when the emotional flame itself, growing dim, flares up for a last brief moment of light and heat. In a religious book on the horrors of slavery, old griefs and old desires unfulfilled, uncomprehended, could vent themselves in despair and indignation over a larger issue, over wrongs which were like exaggerations of her own.

If the slaves of her story were to be sacrificed to the redemption of their race, their blood should be upon a Church that had substituted theology for religion; that

¹ *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in book form, March 20, 1852. It ran in the *National Era* until April 1st.

had meandered into futile quarrels, persecuting Lyman Beecher because he conceded to men ability to obey the commandments of God, and wasted its strength on minor moralities (whether a man might marry his deceased wife's sister), while it dared to traduce the teachings of its Master into a justification of slavery, publicly promulgating "the heresy that the right to buy, sell, and hold men for purposes of gain, was expressly given by God." The blood of the slave should be upon a Church that had lent its support to a system that kept the slave in ignorance of the gospel of salvation and made morality impossible by making women the property of Mr. So-and-So and ignoring the sanctity of marriage between slaves, breaking up their homes, selling wives away from their husbands and children away from their mothers.

Yet she was a child of the Church who would come to its defense when others attacked. To Frederick Douglass she wrote:

You say the church is "pro-slavery." There is a sense in which this may be true . . . the church has the power to put an end to this evil and does not do it. . . . But the church has the same power over intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking, and sin of all kinds. . . . Would you consider it a fair representation of the Christian church in this country to say that it is pro-intemperance, pro-Sabbath-breaking, and pro everything that it might put down if it were in a higher state of moral feeling? If you should make a list of all the abolitionists of the country, I think that you would find a majority of them in the church. . . .

I am a minister's daughter, and a minister's wife, and I have had six brothers in the ministry. . . . Every brother I

have has been in his sphere a leading anti-slavery man. . . . As for myself and husband, we have for the last seventeen years lived on the border of a slave state, and we have never shrunk from the fugitives, and we have helped them with all we had to give. I have received the children of liberated slaves into a family school, and taught them with my own children, and it has been the influence that we found in the church and by the altar that has made us do all this. . . .

After all, my brother, the strength and hope of your oppressed race does lie in the church—in hearts united to Him of whom it is said, “He shall spare the souls of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in His sight.” Everything is against you, but Jesus Christ is for you, and He has not forgotten His church, misguided and erring though it be. I have looked all the field over with despairing eyes; I see no hope but in Him. This movement must and will become a purely religious one.

The thought tempered her indignation. So did the memory of the kindly slave owners she had known in Kentucky, high-principled women among them, many of whom “surrounded by circumstances over which they can have no control, perplexed by domestic cares of which women in free states can have very little conception . . . still go on bravely and patiently from day to day, doing all they can to alleviate what they cannot prevent, and, as far as the sphere of their own immediate power extends, rescuing those who are dependent upon them from the evils of the system.”

It was the System itself that she must attack. Slavery, as Professor Stowe had said, was a social rather than an individual sin.

She would begin her story with those kindly Kentuckians, the Shelbys, and show how the System had

trapped them. Never in cold blood would they have sold a woman's child away from her, nor a trusted man-servant, "down the river"; but their debts had delivered them into the hands of the slave trader.

But for the System, the slave trader, whose name was Haley, might have been merely a not too scrupulous artisan or shopkeeper. Mrs. Stowe relished serving him up, short, thick-set, coarse-featured, swaggering, with gaudy vest and neckerchief and jewelry and having him snubbed by the Shelbys and their servants. She displayed a somewhat ghoulish zest, moreover, for depicting the more frankly brutal companions of his trade who feared neither Hell nor the Devil. "If any of our refined and Christian readers object to the society into which this scene introduces them, let us beg them to begin and conquer their prejudices in time. The catching business, we beg to remind them, is rising to the dignity of a lawful and patriotic profession . . . the trader and catcher may yet be among our aristocracy." The daughter of Roxana Foote was not only protesting against the brutalities inherent in the slave-trade; she was voicing the genteel American's fear and hatred of the ubiquitous, successful vulgarian.

She enjoyed writing about the picturesque details of the Kentucky farm, just as she enjoyed the peculiarities of New England: the charm of the place itself, the antics of the pickaninnies, the beturbaned cook beaming with self-satisfaction over her excellent dinner, the prayer-meeting in the cabin. It had always delighted her to discover the spirit of high comedy in colored people, their sixth sense for the quality of white people, their scorn of such vul-

garians as Haley whom they knew how to annoy most while pretending to help, covering rudeness with obsequiousness, deceiving with honesty the man who took for granted that they would lie.

As for the quadroon, who should be called Eliza, whose child was to be sold away from her, to tell her story was a double release. The recoil of the virgin Harriet Beecher from the ugly possibilities latent in the situation of the woman in the Kentucky church could be banished from memory, once and for all, by spreading those possibilities on paper. And what a comfort to let one's imagination play about the woman's love for her child and to voice her distress! And what a pleasure, after their perilous flight across the ice, to shelter them in the home which Mrs. Stowe liked to dream was hers and to picture herself as she might have been with a life of "sweet ordering" and "arrangement," a dainty, bird-like, little woman with blue eyes and "peach-blow" complexion, sweet-voiced, tactful, compassionate! What a satisfaction to persuade a well-to-do husband, a senator who talked about legality and property rights but was magnanimous at heart, to carry the fugitives to a safer hiding, just as Mr. Stowe and Charles Beecher had done for poor Mina! And what a solution to speed the child on his way wearing the clothes of little lost Charley!

Pursuing Eliza was not only the force that would rob her of her child, but also the malevolent and predatory male who pursued all women. She would escape him, but others were not so fortunate. Mrs. Stowe had heard their stories. Women were bought and sold like cattle. Women

were flogged. Women had their children torn from their arms. Women were debauched. They flung themselves into the river, or went to the dogs and died horribly in noisome places, or turned into avenging furies. She could rid her mind of them—let the psychologist explain it as he will—only by dwelling upon them to the end.

Her own sense of being caught by life, the weight of burdens beyond her strength, the chains of ineluctable duty, the sense of fleeting time that had left her lonely and unsatisfied—all these could project themselves into the lot of the slave and be allayed in telling of his wrongs and condemning the society that had wronged him. If the Uncle Toms must atone for the sins of the world with death beneath the slave-driver's lash, they were the meek who should inherit the earth and the poor to whom belonged the Kingdom of Heaven. Even in this life, they should be comforted by the love of Christ, not only within their own souls, but by its "impersonation in childish form"—to quote Mrs. Stowe—by "the gentle Eva." Mrs. Stowe, we are confident, missed the irony of Eva, frail and consumptive, fading before noon day, too good for this world!

She might also have been puzzled to explain where Eva came from. She recognized many of the characters in her book. The Shelbys, Eliza, George Harris, Legree, Uncle Tom, himself, are all accounted for. Miss Ophelia, full of compassion for the heathen as long as they remained afar off, could have been met in any missionary society. The God-fearing, New England spinster was a type unsympathetic to the playing spirit; and yet Mrs. Stowe was fond of her and respected her orderliness, her flat-footed seri-

ousness, her clear-cut sense of right and wrong. Was there perhaps something of the doughty Catharine in that portrait? Topsy, Mrs. Stowe had taught in her own Sunday school. The minor characters, too, are readily placed. The slaves she had read about in anti-slavery literature or encountered in Cincinnati. The Quakers she had known in their settlements in Ohio. John, the drover, she might have seen on a dozen Ohio steamboats. The "grave-looking gentleman in black, a clergyman," who opined that it was "undoubtedly the intention of Providence that the African race should be servants. . . . 'Cursed be Canaan . . . the Scripture says'"—that would be Dr. Wilson or one of his Old School brethren. And the "slender young man, with a face expressive of great feeling and intelligence," who answered him with the Golden Rule, might be Edward, or Henry Ward, or Charles.

But "little Eva" and her father, Augustine St. Clare, belong among the people who, the writers of fiction tell us, spring full-grown in the mind and live with startling independence. "Your Annie reproached me for letting Eva die," Mrs. Stowe once said to her friend Mrs. Howard. "Why! I could not help it! . . . it affected me so deeply that I could not write a word for two weeks after her death."

Has there ever been a child like Eva? Yes, there have been; but their names are always on gravestones, and their sweet smiles, their heavenly eyes, their singular words and ways, are among the buried treasures of yearning hearts. In how many families do you hear the legend that all the goodness and graces of the living are nothing to the peculiar charms of one who *is*

not! It is as if Heaven had an especial band of angels, whose office it was to sojourn for a season here, and endear to them the wayward human heart, that they might bear it upward with them in their homeward flight. When you see that deep, spiritual light in the eye—when the little soul reveals itself in words sweeter and wiser than the ordinary words of children—hope not to retain that child; for the seal of heaven is on it, and the light of immortality looks out from its eyes.

Even so, beloved Eva! fair star of thy dwelling! Thou art passing away; but they that love thee dearest know it not.

Was Mrs. Stowe idealizing baby Charley? "I have been the mother of seven children," she wrote Mrs. Follen, "the most beautiful and the most loved of whom lies buried near my Cincinnati residence." Is Eva, as Miss Rourke intimates, a portrait of Mrs. Stowe herself? We recall that when Dolly Cushing of Poganuc saves the soul of Zeph Higgins, she behaves like Eva. Indeed, the spirit of Eva inhabits several of Mrs. Stowe's maidens. She was, in fact, Mrs. Stowe's ideal maiden. In depicting her—her beauty, her virtues, her death, made famous by a thousand barn-storming troupers—Mrs. Stowe went on a complete emotional spree:

"A bright, a glorious smile passed over her face, and she said, brokenly—'Oh! love—joy—peace!' gave one sigh and passed from death unto life!

"Farewell, beloved child! the bright, eternal doors have closed after thee; we shall see thy sweet face no more. Oh, woe for them who watched thy entrance into heaven, when they shall awake and find only the cold gray sky of daily life, and thou gone forever!" Her funeral—white, white draperies, white flowers, everywhere white flowers!

—was an antidote for a hundred lugubrious, black funerals.

But Eva was not the peculiar creation of Mrs. Stowe. Said the Earl of Shaftesbury, "Your character of Eva is true. . . . I have . . . seen such myself in zeal, simplicity, and overflowing affection to God and man. It pleases God to show, every now and then, such specimens of his grace, and then remove them before they are tarnished by the world." She appeared in a multitude of guises throughout nineteenth-century literature. Charles Dickens was devoted to her. Remember Tiny Tim and Little Nell and Little Dorrit and Paul Dombey and Agnes and Lucie Manette? But there were thousands of others, serene souls playing variations on Thirteenth Corinthians, figures ranging in age, dignity, and significance from Elsie Dinsmore through Lucy Gray to *Das Ewig Weibliche*. It would be interesting to speculate on their origin. Perhaps they were the Romantics' substitute for the Blessed Virgin of the Middle Ages, who had been lost in the late Renaissance. And what need of the human spirit evoked them in the nineteenth century? To label them sentimentality is to explain nothing. Latter-day feminists and post-war-intellectuals have done their best to make an end of them; yet they still hold the popular fancy.

As for Augustine St. Clare, whose portrait Mrs. Stowe tells us "was drawn . . . with enthusiasm and with hope," he is the projection of another ideal long brooded upon. Here is Cleon by another name and considerably matured:

In the large, clear, blue eyes . . . all was clear, bold, and bright, but with a light wholly of this world! the beautifully cut mouth had a proud and somewhat sarcastic expression,

while an air of free-and-easy superiority sat not ungracefully in every turn and movement of his fine form.

This Byronic-looking gentleman, "having inherited from his mother an exceeding delicacy of constitution," had been saved from being too Byronic by being brought up in Vermont:

In childhood, he was remarkable for an extreme and marked sensitiveness of character, more akin to the softness of woman than the ordinary hardness of his own sex. . . . His talents were of the very first order, although his mind showed a preference always for the ideal and the æsthetic. . . . Soon after the completion of his college course, his whole nature was kindled into one intense and passionate effervescence of romantic passion . . . he saw and won the love of a high-minded and beautiful woman, in one of the Northern States, and they were affianced.

If this affair had been consummated, St. Clare would have lived happily ever after, his soul would, beyond a doubt, have been saved. Unluckily, the high-minded New England woman was snatched from his arms by the chicanery of her guardian:

Stung to madness . . . too proud to supplicate or to seek explanation St. Clare threw himself at once into a whirl of fashionable society, and in a fortnight . . . was the accepted lover of the reigning belle of the season . . . he became the husband of a fine figure, a pair of bright, dark eyes, and a hundred thousand dollars.

Scarcely had the honeymoon begun when he learned from his first love what treachery had been practised upon them. Her letter:

. . . ended with expressions of hope and thankfulness, and professions of undying affection, which were more bitter than death to the unhappy young man. . . .

And thus ended the whole romance and ideal of life for Augustine St. Clare. But the *real* remained—the *real*, like the flat, bare, oozy tide-mud, when the blue, sparkling wave, with all its company of gliding boats and white-winged ships, its music of oars and chiming waters, has gone down and there it lies, flat, slimy, bare—exceedingly real.

Of course, in a novel, people's hearts break, and they die. . . . But in real life we do not die when all that makes life bright dies to us.

Poor Mrs. Stowe!

For Augustine, the reality was Marie St. Clare, type of the spoiled, selfish, cold-blooded women into whose laps drop the beautiful, romantic husbands and many of the other blessings of this life. The high-minded, unselfish loving women, meanwhile, are condemned to struggle under burdens beyond their strength, to lock up their dreams in the secret cupboards of their hearts and plod along with divinity students or temperamental professors or prosy business men.

St. Clare, by his own account, "got the despair of living that Solomon did . . . but . . . instead of being actor and regenerator in society . . . became a piece of driftwood." Irony was the weapon he directed against the world and more particularly against his wife, his cousin Ophelia, and himself, and against religion and slavery. Slavery was an atrocity which he could mitigate only by indulgence to his own slaves; but slavery was also a convenience about which he knew he intended to do nothing.

His only consolation was Little Eva, "the love of Christ manifested in childish form." He could not, of course, find it in the formal religion of the churches, certainly not in churches that quoted scripture to justify slavery:

"Religion! Is what you hear at church religion? Is that which can bend and turn, and descend and ascend, to fit every crooked phase of selfish, worldly society, religion? Is that religion which is less scrupulous, less generous, less just, less considerate for man, than even my own ungodly, worldly, blinded nature? No! When I look for a religion, I must look for something above me, and not something beneath."

The Byronic soul could be saved none the less. The prayers of the humble Uncle Tom could put an end to his dissipation. (He had never really cared for dissipation.) The memory of his mother kept his ideals alive:

"I used to think of her whenever I read in Revelation about the saints that were arrayed in fine linen, clean and white . . . she used to sit at her organ, playing fine old majestic music of the Catholic Church, and singing with a voice more like an angel than a mortal woman; and I would lay my head down on her lap, and cry, and dream, and feel—oh, immeasurably!—things that I had no language to say!"

The death of Little Eva completed the redemption that his mother had begun.

4

The story of Uncle Tom's sojourn among the St. Clares, which occupies the middle third of the book, was the heart of it for Mrs. Stowe and became so for her readers. If the

psychologist finds therein a deal of self-dramatization, his discovery is not, in itself, important. *Alles was ich geschrieben habe sind nur Bruchstücke einer grossen Confession*, could be said by almost any writer, and is often most profoundly true of the work of those unaware of self-revelation. To spread on paper our hopes and fears and loves and hates, deliberately or unconsciously, disguised or frankly revealed, is one of the most common and least destructive ways we have of getting even with life. What we reveal in this way is interesting and important to the extent that it speaks for other people. Many years later, in telling about *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mrs. Stowe said of herself, "The indignation, the pity, the distress, that had long weighed upon her soul seemed to pass off from her, and into the readers of the book."

But the indignation and distress were not directed exclusively against slavery. Her discussion of slavery is surprisingly intellectual for a document conceived in the heat of battle. It has, indeed, the stamp of permanent good sense. She herself expected the anti-slavery forces to find it disappointing. In attacking the system itself, in showing how it trapped the slave owner as well as the slave, she dared to point out that slave owners were no worse than other people. Some of them in view of the temptations to which absolute power exposed them, were superior. In their personal relations with Negroes, they showed less racial antipathy and more Christian charity than many of the northerners who condemned them. In fact, northern racial antipathy was part of the slave owner's dilemma. A benevolent slave owner, inspired to free his slaves, was con-

fronted with the problem of their future. There was no place for them in the southern scheme of things. If they went North, they found that the average northern man did not readily give them jobs, nor welcome them to his home or his schools. The same problems and others were involved in immediate emancipation of all slaves. While to transport them wholesale to Liberia, as some colonizationists advocated, would be to return them to the outer-darkness of Heathendom. Only a program of gradual emancipation accompanied by education could fit the Negro for colonization. Mrs. Stowe offered no easy solution.

When she had made an end of it, her book seemed to her lukewarm and inadequate. Apparently she had no conception of the quality of the thing she had brought forth. With the air of a spinner of fireside tales, she bade farewell to her readers in a chatty epilogue:

The thought of the pleasant family circles that she has been meeting in spirit, week after week, has been a constant refreshment to her, and she cannot leave them without a farewell.

In particular the dear children who have followed her story have her warmest love. Dear children, you will soon be men and women, and I hope that you will learn from this story to remember and pity the poor and oppressed. When you grow up, show your pity by doing all you can for them. Never, if you can help it, let a colored child be shut out from school or treated with neglect and contempt on account of his color. Remember the sweet example of little Eva. . . .

Farewell, dear children, until we meet again.

That the horrors in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might be strong fare for children, did not trouble nineteenth-century par-

ents. A friend of Mrs. Stowe's hopes that "the tears of gentle, sympathizing childhood, that are dropping about many a Christian hearthstone over the wrongs and cruelties depicted by you so touchingly, will water the sod and spring up in bright flowers at your feet."

At the time, Mrs. Stowe herself was reading Horace Mann's plea for the slaves in the warehouse of Bruin and Hill in Alexandria, Virginia. She felt all too familiar with the details of that warehouse, having heard it described by two former slave girls who had been there, Emily and Mary Edmondson, whose ransom had been secured by Henry Ward. She feared that Horace Mann's plea would fall on deaf ears, and that her book, likewise, would go unread and unheeded.

But she could at least take pains to see that it fell into the hands of prominent humanitarians who might give it publicity. She sat down at Great-grandfather General Ward's drop-leaf table and wrote letters forwarding her book to Charles Dickens, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Lord Carlisle, Charles Kingsley, and the Prince Consort. (How did one address a prince? No matter! "To His Royal Highness, Prince Albert"—that would do. And "With deep respect" was a good republican closing.) Prince Albert's secretary sent a polite acknowledgment. The other gentlemen took time out to reply, each in his peculiar fashion.

Macaulay wrote punctiliously:

I sincerely thank you for the volumes which you have done me the honor to send me. I have read them, I cannot say with pleasure; for no work on such a subject can give pleasure, but with high respect for the talents and for the benevolence of the

writer. I have the honor to be, Madam, "Your most faithful servant."

Said Charles Dickens:

I have read your book with the deepest interest and sympathy, and admire, more than I can express to you, both the generous feeling which inspired it, and the admirable power with which it is executed. If I might suggest a fault in what has so charmed me, it would be that you go too far and seek to prove too much I doubt there being any warrant for making out the African race to be a great race.

Lord Carlisle replied:

I return my deep and solemn thanks to Almighty God, who has led and enabled you to write such a book . . . you have brought to your portraiture great grace of style, great power of language, a play of humor which relieves and lightens even the dark depth of the background which you were called upon to reveal, a force of pathos which to give it the highest praise, does not lag behind all the dread reality, and, above all, a variety, a discrimination, a truth in delineation of character which, even to my own scanty and limited experience of the society you describe, accredits itself instantaneously and irresistibly. . . . Whenever you speak of England and her institutions it is in a tone which fails to do them justice. I do not know what distinct charges you think could be established against our aristocracy and capitalists, but you generally convey the impression that the same oppressions in degree, though not in kind, might be brought home to them which are now laid to the charge of Southern slave-holders. . . . The circumstances in which they are placed, and the institutions by which they are surrounded, make the parallel wholly inapplicable. . . . Our capitalists are very much the same sort of persons as your own in the Northern States.

The most effusive response came from Charles Kingsley:

I cannot tell you how pleased I am to see coming from across the Atlantic a really healthy indigenous growth, "autochthones," free from all second and third hand Germanisms and Italianisms and all other unrealisms. . . . I pay you a compliment in saying that I have not read it through. It is too painful. . . . But I will read it through and reread it, in due time, though when I have done so, I shall have nothing more to say than what everyone says now, that it is perfect.

I cannot resist transcribing a few lines which I received this morning from an excellent critic: "To my mind it is the greatest novel ever written, and though it will seem strange, it reminded me in a lower sphere more of Shakespeare than anything modern I have ever read; not in the style, nor in the humor, nor in the pathos—though Eva set me a crying worse than Cordelia did at sixteen—but in the many-sidedness, and, above all, in that marvellous clearness of insight and insight, which makes it seemingly impossible for her to see any one of her characters without showing him or her at once as distinct man or woman, different from all others."

I have a debt of personal thanks to you for the book, also, from a most noble and great woman, my own mother, a West-Indian, who in great sickness and sadness read your book with delighted tears. What struck her was the way in which you, first of all writers, she said, had dived down into the depths of the Negro heart, and brought out his common humanity without losing hold for a moment of his race peculiarities.

Mrs. Stowe might have spared herself the trouble of writing to these gentlemen. By the time their letters reached her, eight power presses in Boston were running night and day to supply the demand for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ten thousand copies were sold in America, within a few days after publication; over three hundred thou-

sand, within a year. While in London, Sampson, Low, and Company, who became Mrs. Stowe's English publishers, reported eighteen different houses supplying the demand and forty editions, varying from an illustrated edition at fifteen shillings to one at sixpence. They estimated that over a million and a half copies had been sold in Great Britain and her colonies. Eventually the book was translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Danish, Dutch, Flemish, Polish, Portuguese, Bohemian, Hungarian, Servian, Armenian, Illyrian, Romaic, Welsh, Wallachian, Finnish and Siamese. The Czar was said to have used it as a political weapon against his nobles. Florence Nightingale reported that it "was read by the sick and suffering in Eastern military hospitals with intense interest." It impelled a Siamese lady to free her slaves and set Heinrich Heine to reading the Bible.

It was, moreover, dramatized almost immediately. According to Mr. Joseph Kaye (*Theatre Magazine*, August, 1929), Asa Hutchinson wrote to Mrs. Stowe for permission to dramatize it, in the summer of 1852. She refused on the ground that if the theaters began showing respectable, moral plays, the young people of Christian families would be allowed to go to see them and would develop the habit of promiscuous theater-going, as a result. This attitude may explain her failure to secure the dramatic rights for her book. In any case, without her permission, and with no profit to herself, a company of actors was playing George L. Aiken's version to crowded houses in New York, during the winter of 1853-54, eighteen times a week, the company eating its meals in costume behind the scenes. It was

still being played, in 1934. Mrs. Stowe herself made a dramatic version, *The Christian Slave*, in 1855, to be read by Mrs. Mary E. Webb at anti-slavery meetings.

Scenes from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were also made into verse and set to music. A collection of thirteen of these—"Eva's Parting," "Uncle Tom's Grave," "Eliza's Flight," and so on—under the title, *Lays of Liberty, or Verses for the Times*, appeared in Boston, in 1854.

Such widespread popularity cannot be explained by saying that the book was published opportunely when the excitement over slavery was approaching a climax. Such persistent appeal could not be maintained by a mere bit of propaganda against slavery as it existed in the southern United States prior to 1865. Even at the time of publication, it was not Mrs. Stowe's sensible ideas about the system of slavery that made the book a best seller or that precipitated violence between slavery and anti-slavery forces. Indeed, the public quite lost sight of her reasonableness.

What set people at each other's throats were the individual horrors that had haunted the mind of Mrs. Stowe herself: slave traders and bloodhounds pursuing Eliza; the woman whose child had been stolen, drowning herself in the Mississippi; old Prue dying in the cellar where "the flies had got to her"; Rosa sent to the public whipping-house; Cassy's tale of atrocities; Emmeline and Lucy and Uncle Tom in the hands of Legree—horrors that still fascinate the public with its strange passion for the things that it fears and hates, its inexplicable delight in destroying the things that it loves.

But from such ghoulish pleasure, the reader of *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin was distracted to laughter by the antics of Sam and Andy and Topsy, the primness of Miss Ophelia; or moved to "delighted tears" by Little Eva and Uncle Tom; or beguiled into romantic reverie by Augustine St. Clare. To the scoffing intellectual wrote George Sand:

If its judges, possessed with the love of what they call "artistic work" find unskillful treatment in the book, look well at them to see if their eyes are dry . . . those who pretend . . . to judge . . . are often vanquished by their own feelings . . . when unwilling to avow it. . . . This book is essentially domestic and of the family, this book, with its long discussions, its minute details, its portraits carefully studied. Mothers of families, young girls, little children, servants even, can read and understand them, and men themselves . . . cannot disdain them.

In other words, the great, sprawling, domestic middle-class could find itself in Mrs. Stowe's book. In her guileless unleashing of her own emotions was satisfaction not only for the passions that gentility and respectability had suppressed, but also, and at the same time, the passion for gentility itself. Here was compensation for "the flat, bare, oozy tide-mud" of reality. Here was the ideal maiden. Here was the Lord Byron whom the middle-class denounced and loved. "What hand has ever drawn a type more fascinating and admirable than St. Clare?" exclaimed George Sand. "Is it not man himself, human nature itself, with its innate virtues, its good aspirations, and its deplorable failures? . . . The story of his precious life is all told in a word—'to aspire and to regret.' He has never learned to *will*." George Sand, to be sure, knew the type

from experience. Here, too, was the Protestant's rebellion against orthodoxy. Here in the protest against the lot of the slave woman, was the protest soon to become a movement of woman against the lot of all women. Here, indeed, was the nineteenth century's protest against life in general.

Humanitarianism, offspring of consanguineous pity and fear, made vociferous by the industrial revolution, could find complete expression in denouncing slavery. Slavery was the nightmare exaggeration of the shadow of servitude that darkened the promised land of material prosperity. How many lives had that shadow embittered! Who could tell when it might fall upon him in the mischances of a too swiftly changing society! Those who bore the burden of industrialism, those who reaped its benefits, and the great class in between for whom the promised land was a mirage—all could be stirred to pity and fear, both for the slave and for themselves.

"I tell you," said Augustine St. Clare, "if there is anything that is revealed with the strength of a divine law in our times, it is that the masses are to rise . . . they will govern *you*, when their time comes . . . and they will be just such rulers as you make them. The French *noblesse* chose to have the people '*sans culotte*,' and they had '*sans culotte*' governors to their hearts' content." Not only France but Haiti and Santo Domingo also were fresh in his mind, and in the mind of Mrs. Stowe, and of her generation.

Uncle Tom's Cabin belongs, as Carl Van Doren has said, to folklore.

5

"Your book is going to be the great pacificator," wrote a friend. "It will unite both North and South." This, indeed, Mrs. Stowe began to see as the mission of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To Lord Carlisle she outlined its purpose: "1st. To soften and moderate the bitterness of feeling in *extreme abolitionists*. 2nd. To convert to abolitionist views many whom this same bitterness had repelled. 3rd. To inspire the free colored people with self-respect, hope, and confidence. 4th. To inspire universally through the country a kindlier feeling toward the Negro race."

The reason for such ingenuousness is not far to seek. Her intention had never been deliberately bellicose. Moreover, when her book was finished Mrs. Stowe discovered not only that she had got rid of much personal distress, that much bitterness had flowed away from her soul, but also that life had suddenly opened up for her to an extent transcending hope or belief.

The realization came in the enormous sale of the book—three thousand copies the first day; it came in her first royalty check, ten thousand dollars for her little 10 per cent of the American sales during the first three months; it came in letters, letters like those already quoted from people to whom she herself had written, but also many more from quite unexpected sources. The abolitionists wrote her words of praise. "Ten thousand thanks for thy immortal book," cried Whittier. "To have written at once the most powerful of contemporary fiction and the most



M. B. Stowe

From a crayon portrait by George Richmond, London, 1853.

efficient of anti-slavery tracts is a double triumph in literature and philanthropy, to which this country has heretofore seen no parallel," said Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Even the Beechers' old antagonist, William Lloyd Garrison, joined the chorus. Her social horizon also expanded amazingly.

It is difficult to keep track of her in the months following the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She is in Boston and Brooklyn and New Haven and Hartford and Brunswick and Andover. Everywhere enthusiastic people rush to welcome her. The great Jenny Lind sends tickets for a concert and a hundred dollars toward rescuing the Edmondson family from slavery. Rescuing the Edmondsons is the most heart-warming of experiences. Mrs. Stowe was familiar with the family from having assumed responsibility for the education of the two daughters, Emily and Mary, ransomed by Plymouth Church, four years earlier. Now the mother, Milly, is seeking freedom for her two remaining children. How marvelous that little Hattie Beecher, just by appearing at a meeting, could move people to save them! How marvelous to be able to write a check of her own to ransom not only the two children but old Milly herself! Milly in whom she sees a living manifestation of the Christ-like soul of Uncle Tom!

In off moments, she writes for the *National Era*, three "Sonnets for the Times," three articles on Maine, and accounts of Longfellow and Hawthorne. She has started a story about Orr's Island. She finds time to read Chaucer and is charmed by "the reverential Christian spirit in which he viewed all things." She goes out at dawn to listen

to the birds and compose poetry. Some of the verses of these early hours have been preserved in the hymnals and in the memories of good church-going people.

Still, still with Thee when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee!

Also she journeys back and forth between Brunswick and Andover, Massachusetts, arranging about living quarters in Andover, supervising the transformation of an old stone workshop into a dwelling, and eventually moving her household into it. For Professor Stowe has accepted the chair of Sacred Literature at Andover Theological Seminary. He has business in Cincinnati and Brunswick; so Hattie must attend to the moving. But she is keyed to concert pitch and does not mind. She regrets leaving Brunswick, for she has become attached to the place and the people. But from Andover, late in the summer, she writes to the Professor:

What a beautiful place it is! There is everything here that there is at Brunswick except the sea—a great exception. Yesterday I was out all the forenoon sketching elms. There is no end to the beauty of these trees. I shall fill my book with them before I get through. We had a levee at Professor Park's last week—quite a brilliant affair. Today there is to be a fishing party to go to Salem beach and have a chowder.

It seems almost too good to be true that we are going to have such a house in such a beautiful place, and to live here among all these agreeable people, where everybody seems to love you so much and to think so much of you. I am almost afraid to accept it, and should not, did I not see the Hand that gives it

all and know that it is both firm and true. He knows if it is best for us, and His blessing addeth no sorrow therewith. I cannot describe to you the constant undercurrent of love and joy and peace ever flowing through my soul. I am so happy—so blessed!

In the meantime, the enormous European sale of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had also begun and letters from distinguished Europeans were finding their way to the old stone house in Andover. From England came news that the Duchess of Sutherland, whose beauty was familiar to Mrs. Stowe from Sir Thomas Lawrence's famous portrait, had been moved by the book to hold a meeting in her London home, historic Stafford House, at which was drafted an anti-slavery appeal from the women of the British Empire to the women of America. There came also an invitation from the Anti-Slavery Society of Glasgow for the Stowes to tour the British Isles on behalf of the cause. Mrs. Stowe would not have been a good American if she had not cherished the dream of going to Europe. At last she would see the land of her fathers, the land of Scott and Burns and Byron! She would see "Shakespeare's grave and Milton's mulberry-tree" and London in May!

In the meantime, also, her royalties kept coming in. What if they were a mere fraction of the publishers' profits, they still seemed enormous. Besides, when she considered all the good that her book was doing, she felt that it would have been worth while to publish it even without royalties. But the money gave her a glorious sense of power and opportunity. She lay awake dreaming of the things she might do with it. Some of it should certainly be used

for a "permanent memorial of good to the colored race," and Catharine's persistent influence is apparent in plans for a normal school for colored teachers.

But in the midst of beatitude, there were moments when the habit of weariness returned to her; moments when in the throngs of people so strangely eager to see her, she could have said with Bacon, "a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love." Perhaps she sensed the menace in applause, a mob demonstration, likely at any moment to turn into hissing. It came upon her that she had no interest in fame, did not want it, had never wanted it. What she yearned for was what almost all women—almost all people—yearn for, an absorbing, sustaining, sheltering affection. She reached out to Professor Stowe for it. To whom should one look if not to one's husband? The Professor, alas! wanted to be sustained and sheltered himself. The removal to Andover worried him. Once more he was faced with the hazards of change. And an ominous cloud was on the horizon. The attacks on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had begun.

6

The book had accomplished what Catharine Beecher had long ago pointed out as the inevitable result of abolitionist propaganda in the North. The entire South was boiling with indignation at having its dirty linen washed and hung on the line by northern hands. Others, also, were offended. Clergymen, notably Old School Presbyterians,

did not like what Mrs. Stowe said about the Church. Nor was their attitude toward her softened by the fact that Lyman Beecher had chosen the time of the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to publish his *Views on Theology*, and Edward, his *Conflict of Ages* in which, as his father said, he "demolished the Calvinistic barns." Orthodox people did not care for any of the Beechers—radicals and sensationalists, all of them, especially Henry Ward who drew the crowds to his church with emotional harangues and indecorous showmanship. Now the Beecher women were rushing into the limelight to an extent totally inconsistent with female modesty.

One clergyman in particular, the Reverend Joel Parker of Philadelphia, threatened a libel suit. Mrs. Stowe went on happily visiting in Hartford and Brooklyn. Mr. Parker *had* said substantially what she had accused him of saying. If he insisted that he did not mean what she had thought he meant, she was willing to tell the public that he insisted that he did not mean what she had thought he meant. She turned the whole matter over to Henry Ward. When Mr. Parker attacked both her and Henry through the columns of the *New York Observer*, she was too busy to read his scathing articles.

For some months, in fact, she turned a deaf ear to all attacks. If many people denounced her, just as many praised and defended, and the sale of her book continued. The Beechers were used to attacks and throve upon them. Indeed Mrs. Stowe believed that she could welcome trouble of any sort. Had not all her troubles turned out to be blessings in disguise? If she had never known disappointment

and grief and despair, if she had never been burdened, she could not have written *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Professor Stowe, however, could not take the onslaught so lightly. His good name was being dragged in the dust and Hattie had gone off visiting, leaving him to brood alone. At length, partly to appease him and partly to reinforce her attack on slavery, which she began to think might need reinforcing, she determined to write an introduction for a new edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, stating the source of her material and giving new evidence to prove her charges against the system.

She found the attacks against her summarized in an article in the *New York Courier and Enquirer*. It declared that in depicting the cruel treatment of slaves, the separation of slave families, and their want of religious education, Mrs. Stowe had not only displayed "a ridiculously extravagant spirit of generalization" making "exceptional or impossible cases" appear representative of the whole situation, but had described atrocities which could not have happened, because the southern states had passed laws against them. The article also accused her of overdrawing her characters, making her black people too white and her white people too black. It deplored her malicious attitude toward the clergy.

With the painstaking thoroughness of a candidate for a Master's degree, Mrs. Stowe set about refuting these allegations, one by one. She called upon friends and acquaintances for help and soon found herself deluged with material to such an extent that she expanded the mere introduction she had purposed to write, into a book as long

as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* itself and considerably "stronger."

If in writing her novel she had recognized the need of interspersing the horrors with humor and pathos and love, in writing *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* she felt no such compulsion. If her critics demanded facts, facts they should have and to spare. As she examined the material sent to her, indignation welled up and boiled over, indignation not only against the system of slavery but also against those who had accused her of bearing false witness. Reaction from her months of elation had set in. She was suddenly very tired again. On her table was a mass of hideous information that had to be weeded and sorted and made ready for publication. Moreover, she was pressed for time; for her departure for England was only three months away, and her work must be finished before she left. All of Catharine Beecher's precepts regarding the proper rôle of women in the anti-slavery cause, if ever taken to heart, were thrown to the winds. The book is written in a crescendo of outraged feeling.

It begins calmly with an exposition of the source of the characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to prove that they were not overdrawn. Part II moves on to discuss the laws relating to slavery to show why statutes drawn up to protect the slave did not protect him, and ends with an apostrophe. "Slavery is despotism!"

On which side, then, stands the American nation, in the great controversy which is now going on between self-government and despotism? On which sides does America stand, in the great controversy for liberty of conscience?

Do foreign governments exclude their population from the

reading of the Bible?—The slave of America is excluded by the most effectual means possible. Do we say, “Ah! but we read the Bible to our slaves, and present the gospel orally?”—This is precisely what religious despotism in Italy says. Do we say that we have no objection to our slaves reading the Bible, if they will stop there; but that with this there will come in a flood of general intelligence which will upset the existing state of things?—This is precisely what is said in Italy.

Do we say we should be willing that the slave should read his Bible, but that he, in his ignorance, will draw false and erroneous conclusions from it, and for that reason we prefer to impart its truths to him orally?—This, also, is precisely what the religious despotism of Europe says.

Do we say, in our vain-glory, that despotic government dreads the coming in of anything calculated to elevate and educate the people?—And is there not the same dread through all the despotic slave governments of America?

On which side, then, does the American nation stand, in the great, last QUESTION of the age?

In Part III she relates experiences of individual slaves to prove that reality is more harrowing than any of the incidents in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; that public opinion, which the apologists claim protects the slave, does not protect him, because habit has inured people to the horrors of slavery. She dwells, also, upon the demoralizing effect of slavery upon free labor in the South.

Part IV is an indictment of the churches. Forgetting her earlier defense of them to Frederick Douglass, Mrs. Stowe points out the fact that no American politician “would ever undertake to carry a measure against which all the clergy of the country should unite,” because politicians recognize

that the American clergyman is, in the truest sense, the representative of his church. The church members "choose him and retain him because he expresses their ideas of truth and right." The churches and the clergy could easily put an end to slavery if they wished to do so. But they have not put an end to it, nor prevented its increase, nor done anything to mitigate its abuses. She considers the leading denominations in both North and South, one by one and in detail, to show that none of them except the Society of Friends has done more than express disapproval of slavery. While in the South, many have agreed with Bishop Freeman of Texas that "without a new revelation from heaven no man was authorized to pronounce slavery wrong." A number of southern clergymen whom she lists by name, have even written letters defending the lynching of abolitionists and threatening such men as William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan. In the North the denominations have frequently taken the stand that slavery is an economic and political question outside the jurisdiction of religious bodies whose concern is with the Kingdom of God in the World Beyond. The august General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had resolved, in 1843, "That the Assembly do not think it for the edification of the church for this body to take any action on the subject of slavery." At the same time they had also resolved, "That the fashionable amusement of promiscuous dancing is so entirely unscriptural . . . as . . . to call for the faithful and judicious exercise of discipline on the part of the Church Sessions."

As the indictment progresses, indignation kindles and flames to white heat. The Beecher gift of words, the Beecher emotionalism, declare themselves. The book ends with nine chapters of pulpit oratory which more than justify the old regret of Lyman Beecher that Harriet was not another son destined for the ministry:

Suppose a fire bursts out in the streets of Boston, while the regular conservators of the city, who have the keys of the fire-engines and the regulation of fire-companies, are sitting together in some distant part of the city, consulting for the public good. The cry of fire reaches them, but they think it a false alarm. The fire is no less real for all that. It burns and rages and roars, till everybody in the neighborhood sees that something must be done. A few stout leaders break open the doors of the engine houses, drag out the engines and begin, regularly or irregularly, playing on the fire. But the destroyer still advances. Messengers come in hot haste to the hall of the deliberators and in the unselect language of fear and terror revile them for not coming out.

"Bless me!" says a decorous leader of the body, "what horrible language these men use!"

"They show a very bad spirit," remarks another; "we can't possibly join them in such a state of things."

Here the more energetic members of the body rush out to see if the thing be really so; and in a few minutes come back more earnest than the others.

"Oh! there is a fire! . . . Come out, come out! As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between us and death!"

"I am not going out; everybody that goes out gets crazy," says one. . . .

But by this time the angry fire has burned into their very neighborhood. The red demon glares into their windows. And now, fairly aroused, they get up and begin to look out.

"Well there *is* a fire and no mistake!" says one.

"Something ought to be done," says another.

"Yes," says a third, "if it wasn't for being mixed up with such a crowd and rabble of folks, I'd go out."

"Upon my word," says another, "there are *women* in the ranks, carrying pails of water! There, one woman is going up a ladder to get those children out. What an indecorum! If they'd manage this matter properly, we would join them."

And now come lumbering over from Charlestown the engines and fire-companies.

"What impudence of Charlestown," say these men, "to be sending over here, just as if we could not put out our own fires! They have fires over there, as much as we do."

And now the flames roar and burn and shake hands across the street. They leap over the steeples and glare demoniacally out of the church-windows.

"For Heaven's sake, DO SOMETHING! . . . Pull down the houses! Blow up those blocks of stores with gunpowder! *Anything* to stop it!"

"See, now what ultra radical measures they are going at," says one of the spectators.

Brave men who have rushed into the thickest of the fire, come out and fall dead in the street.

"They are impractical enthusiasts. They have thrown their lives away in foolhardiness!"

So, Church of Christ, burns that awful fire! Evermore burning, burning, over church and altar, over senate-house and forum; burning up liberty, burning up religion! No *earthly* hands kindled that fire. From its sheeted flame and wreaths of sulphurous smoke glares out upon thee the eye of the ENEMY who was a murderer from the beginning. It is a fire that BURNS TO THE LOWEST HELL!

Church of Christ, there *was* an hour when this fire might have been extinguished by thee. Now, thou standest like a mighty man astonished—like a mighty man that cannot save.

But the Hope of Israel is not dead. The savior thereof in time of trouble is alive. . . .

O Church of Jesus! consider what hath been said in the midst of thee. What a heresy hast thou tolerated in thy bosom! Thy God the defender of slavery! Thy God the patron of slave law! Thou hast suffered the character of thy God to be slandered. Thou has suffered false witness against thy Redeemer and thy Sanctifier. The Holy Trinity of Heaven has been foully traduced in the midst of thee; and that God whose throne is awful in justice has been made the patron and leader of oppression. . . .

Look, we beseech you, at the mournful march of the slave-coffles; follow the bloody course of the slave-ships on your coast. What, suppose you, does the Lamb of God think of all these things? . . . What does He think of Christian wives forced from their husbands, and husbands from their wives? What does He think of Christian daughters, whom His church . . . leaves to be sold as merchandise? . . .

Did it never seem to you, O Christian! when you have read the sufferings of Jesus, that you would gladly have suffered with Him? . . . *That* you cannot do. That hour is over. Christ, now, is exalted, crowned, glorified. . . . What chance have you, among the multitude, to prove your love? . . . Is there a people among you despised and rejected of men, heavy with oppression, acquainted with grief. . . . Christian, you can acknowledge Christ in them! . . .

In the last judgment will He not say to you, "I have been in the slave-prison—in the slave-coffle. I have been sold in your markets; I have toiled for naught in your fields; I have been smitten on the mouth in your courts of justice; I have been denied a hearing in my own church, and ye cared not for it. Ye went, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." And if ye shall answer, "*When*, Lord?" He shall say unto you, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

7

Three years later, when Plymouth Church, at the instigation of Henry Ward Beecher, was equipping northern emigrants with Sharp's rifles, "Beecher Bibles," to help them make Kansas a free state, and when the Supreme Court was considering the fate of Dred Scott, Mrs. Stowe transmogrified much of the material in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* into a novel. A letter written jointly by Professor and Mrs. Stowe to the publisher, discusses the title: "'Dread, a Tale of the Dismal Swamp' is startling, suggestive, perfectly appropriate, full of meaning, and in the present aspect of our country's affairs, has a fearfully symbolic, prophetic sound," writes the Professor. "As things now are, the very title itself will sell thousands of copies." And Mrs. Stowe adds a postscript: "*Dread* is in reality the hero of the book. The Dismal Swamp the theatre and now when every body is in an excited state and craving excitement this name will go—I see it."

Go it did, apparently, although the critics scoffed. One hundred thousand copies of the English edition, alone, were sold within four weeks. Queen Victoria preferred it to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. So did Harriet Martineau, who declared, "it seems to me so splendid a work of genius that nothing I can say can give you an idea of the intensity of admiration with which I read it."

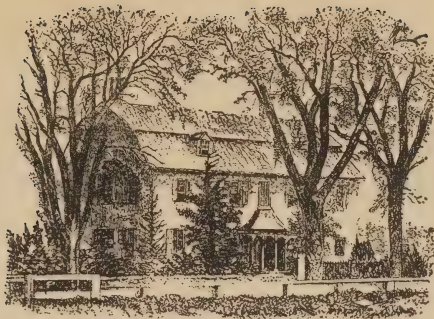
But the power that produced *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had spent itself. The emotional fire that had given vitality to scenes and characters, even to those quite alien to Mrs.

Stowe's experience; that had thrilled the reader, despite the hurried, careless writing, the bombast, the melodrama—that fire had burned out. *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* was conceived in the head of a writer whose interest in the slave, though unabated, had become intellectual. Although the greater part of the story is compounded of incidents that actually happened to real people, already recorded in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, both incidents and people seem particularly unreal—a patchwork of circumstances assembled by main force to produce an effect. The reader is at once aware that, while Mrs. Stowe was well supplied with facts to prove the evils of slavery, she knew nothing whatever of society in Virginia and Carolina. The efforts of her imagination to make amends for her ignorance produced fantastic results that would indicate that the “Germanisms and Italianisms” which Kingsley had congratulated her upon having escaped, had at length caught up with her. Of her choice of subject she says in the preface, “There is no ground, ancient or modern, whose vivid lights, gloomy shadows, and grotesque groupings, afford to the novelist so wide a scope for the exercise of his powers. In the near vicinity of modern civilization of the most matter-of-fact kind exist institutions which carry us back to the twilight of the feudal ages.”

Between her first novel and her second were four extraordinarily happy years, as years go. She had been to Europe. She had been greeted by the great people of her era. And she had fallen in love with Victorian Gothic.



HOLIDAYS



THE STONE CABIN AT ANDOVER

I

IT was an exhausted little woman who made ready, in the spring of 1853, to tour the British Isles with Professor Stowe and Charles Beecher on behalf of the slave—too ill and weary to stand up and be fitted for the new brown Chinese silk she had bought for the journey. The twins, Hattie and Eliza, young ladies of sixteen, now, folded the material carefully and put it into her trunk. She could have it made in London or perhaps in Paris. The trip would be a rest and diversion.

On April 11th, they reached Liverpool. From there they journeyed to Scotland, visiting Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee; thence to Birmingham and London. Toward the end of May, Professor Stowe returned to America. Mrs. Stowe and Charles lingered on, going to the Continent in June, to travel in France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium, until September.

The following spring, there appeared, as the work of all three of them, two volumes of *Sunny Memories of*

Foreign Lands. One surmises that the Professor was largely responsible for the publication. He was goaded by the American press, which resented British propaganda against slavery in America and denounced and ridiculed the Stowes for their share in it. The furor over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had aligned the Stowes, willy-nilly, with Garrison and Sumner and the rest of the radicals. Public opinion put them in that position and treated them accordingly. The Professor was impelled to defend himself. From his earlier position as temperate advocate of gradual emancipation he had moved to the point where he saw slavery as "a blight, a canker, a poison, in the very heart of our republic; . . . its encroachments . . . so enormous, and its progress so rapid," that the conflict was now not only for the emancipation of the slaves but even more for the defense of the rights of free citizens. His rejoinder to the hostile American press that had misrepresented the Stowes' British tour, was an introduction to the *Sunny Memories*, fifty pages of unreadably fine print, giving detailed reports of thirteen anti-slavery meetings in Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and London.

It is a relief to turn from them to Mrs. Stowe's letters and Charles Beecher's journal. The letters, Mrs. Stowe explains, "are the impressions, as they arose, of a most agreeable visit, compiled from what was written at the time and on the spot. Some few were entirely written after the author's return." Although she reports many conversations on slavery, improves each opportunity to point a moral on the subject, and devotes one whole chapter to the anti-slavery activities of Clarkson, her letters are not anti-slavery propa-

ganda. For accounts of the thirteen anti-slavery meetings she contents herself with sending her relatives and friends clippings from the British press. Her memories are indubitably sunny. From end to end of her share of the two volumes there are not, in all, a dozen pages of harsh criticism.

Even the long, uncomfortable voyage furnished material for amusement in retrospect. To be sure, Queen Elizabeth, a heroine of her childhood, has become on closer acquaintance a "most repulsive and disagreeable woman." Napoleon III, who has just made himself emperor, is a "tyrant who has overthrown the hopes of France." While the fabulous Guy of Warwick, the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne, and the relics of St. Ursula are objects of ridicule to all sensible Protestant Americans. The imminence of rain in the British Isles is a drawback to sight-seeing. There is too much drinking in Scotland and the gin shops of London are appalling in number and iniquity. The smoke and smut and gloom of the country between Berwick and Newcastle must be very hard on the morals of the poor. ("I know of no one circumstance more unfavorable to moral purity than the necessity of being physically dirty.") Dirt and squalor, indeed, are an offense wherever found, among the cretins of Chamonix or in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The Continental Sabbath, although agreeable, seems to bear a direct relation to political freedom. "There is not a single nation, possessed of a popular form of government, which has not our Puritan theory of the Sabbath—Protestant Switzerland, England, Scotland and America. . . . The very element of a popu-

lar government must be that self-control in the individual," which the Puritan Sabbath provides weekly practice in acquiring. The failure of popular government in France is directly traceable to the extermination of her Puritans by a "Jezebel de Medici." Since then, in religion, the French have vibrated "between scepticism and superstition" to the impairment of their soundness in all other matters. As a good republican Mrs. Stowe feels that she should deprecate the magnificence of Warwick Castle and rejoice in the passing of all vestiges of feudalism. Actually she is thrilled by "the mouldering remains" and as pleased as a child with dukes and duchesses in the flesh. Indeed, she is delighted with the people generally. If the French at first glance appear too much absorbed in "the outward and visible," upon closer acquaintance she likes them as well as she likes the English and the Scotch and she is charmed by all three. As for the Germans, though their beer drinking and smoking and slow, stolid ways make them seem "perfectly earthy . . . an ethereal fire is all the while working in them and bursting out in most unexpected little jets of poetry and sentiment, like blossoms on a cactus." The two volumes are proof of the playing spirit's unusual capacity for enjoyment and surprising catholicity of interest, as well. A more ingenuously happy record of a journey would be hard to find.

Although they were in England and Scotland less than two months and on the Continent three, the British part of the trip fills nearly two-thirds of the book. "The kind of reception which awaited us . . . was all a surprise and an embarrassment to me," writes Professor Stowe. It was

an astonishment to his wife. They went to England expecting to attend a number of meetings and to be greeted by anti-slavery enthusiasts. Mr. Stowe would, of course, be called upon to address the meetings, but Mrs. Stowe anticipated no such obligation for herself; not only because of the precepts laid down by Catharine Beecher reflecting the popular opinion of women who made speeches, but also because, unlike Catharine, she had not the slightest desire to make a speech. The reality of their welcome was a bewildering dream.

Wherever they went in England and Scotland the populace thronged to see them, not only at great public gatherings arranged in their honor, but on the dock when they landed, at every railroad station, on village greens, in the streets of the cities; all sorts of people, lords and ladies and city officials, Quakers and clergymen and famous authors and statesmen, great horny-handed Scotch farmers, mill workers, and children. Charles Beecher was kept busy answering letters, words of praise, requests, invitations. Gifts were bestowed, personal tributes and offerings for the anti-slavery cause: an offering in an embroidered silk purse from the Friends of Aberdeen; a thousand golden sovereigns on a silver salver from the people of Scotland; a golden bracelet in the form of a slave's shackle from the Duchess of Sutherland; an inkstand eighteen inches long, wrought of silver with figures representing Religion with the Bible in her hand giving liberty to the slave, from the ladies of Surrey Chapel; a gold pen from "a band of beautiful children"; a reticule used in carrying the first anti-slavery tracts in Great Britain; a gold-lined casket of bog-

oak filled with Ireland's offering for the slave. Later there followed her to Andover twenty-six folio volumes bound in blue morroco embossed with the American eagle in gold, containing the signatures of 562,448 women of the British Empire to Lord Shaftesbury's *Affectionate and Christian Address from the Women of Great Britain to the Women of America*.

Throughout the triumphal procession one imagines her as Professor Stowe described her on a later occasion, looking "as meek as Moses in her little battered straw hat and gray cloak, seeming to say, 'I didn't come here o' purpose.'" In London, she sat to George Richmond for what has come to be her most familiar portrait. Richmond's forte, according to Mrs. Stowe, consisted in "seizing and fixing those fleeting traits . . . which go far toward making up our idea of a person's appearance." Perhaps our idea of her depends too much upon this portrait with the tired eyes and wistful mouth. Nevertheless, when she returned to America, she sent an open letter to Scotland beginning with an apology for having, as she believed, failed to measure up to their expectations. Her vitality had been exhausted by the labor of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. But no matter what her health, she still lacked the talent and the inclination and had, moreover, too much of Lyman Beecher's wit and common sense to play the rôle of champion of a cause. "I was as a grasshopper in my own eyes," she writes; and again, of the crowds gathered to see her at the doors of Glasgow Cathedral, "What went ye out for to see? a reed shaken with the wind?" She was sorry. She would have liked to be some one large and



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE
From the bust by Susan D. Durant, 1856.

forceful with riches of wisdom and eloquence to shower upon an expectant public. But the public would have to take her for whatever she was worth and might draw some satisfaction from the thought that God had chosen an insignificant creature as an instrument of good to the slave.

Nevertheless, the mass-meetings and large entertainments were nervously exhausting. She had to be excused from some of them altogether, to spend a day in bed or on a quiet excursion. But in spite of fatigue and illness, she was able to do a surprising amount of sight-seeing, to enjoy her social contacts and to lay the foundation for lasting friendships with some of the famous people who entertained her.

Her *Sunny Memories*, which Mrs. Browning praised for its simplicity and deprecated for its provincialism, is so simple and so provincial, such an American document, in fact, even to the casual spelling of foreign names, that it is worth preserving and dwelling upon for the very reasons that made it unacceptable as literature to the literati of Mrs. Stowe's own generation. Here all of the forces that had molded her from within and from without found expression.

2

All of her contacts were predetermined by the Protestant's religion of morality and philanthropy. It was as a philanthropist that she was invited to the British Isles, philanthropists were her hosts, and as such she reveres them. In fact, she respects them so much and takes them so

seriously that she not only accepts meekly the admonitions of Sybil Jones, female preacher for the Society of Friends, against the temptations of flattery and worldliness that may beset her in London, but quite misses the joke—and Mrs. Stowe was usually quick at seeing them—when Sybil urges her to go to the west coast of Ireland, “adding with great feeling, ‘It was the miseries I saw there that have ruined my health.’”

In Liverpool the Stowes are entertained by Mrs. Edward Cropper, daughter of Lord Chief Justice Denman, who has been active in getting signatures to a petition against slavery from the women of Liverpool and its vicinity, and in collecting a penny offering for the cause. In Scotland they are under the wing of the anti-slavery societies of Glasgow and Edinburgh. In Birmingham they are the guests of Joseph Sturge, Quaker, who fathered a movement to abstain from the use of slave-grown cotton and sugar. In London their hosts are Congregational ministers: the Reverend Mr. Sherman, incumbent of Surrey Chapel, who is in the habit of entertaining American clergymen; and the Reverend Mr. Binney, pastor of the Lord Mayor.

The Lord Mayor is the first of a considerable list of notables who invite them to dine. Others are the Earl of Carlisle, who has written a preface for one of the English Editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; his sister, the Duchess of Sutherland, who has previously entertained Garrison; her son-in-law, the Duke of Argyll; the Earl of Shaftesbury; the Archbishop of Canterbury; Sir Charles Trevelyan, son-in-law of Zachary Macaulay, “undaunted la-

borer for the slave"; the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell; Dean Milman of St. Paul's Cathedral. Through these she meets many other celebrities: Macaulay, Dickens, Thackeray, Cruikshank, Gladstone, Palmerston, Cobden, Mrs. Jameson, Lady Byron, Mrs. Gaskell—to mention the more famous.

After the manner of philanthropists, she is interested in all aspects of philanthropy and reform. The home of Clarkson is a shrine to be visited; so is Kossuth in exile. ("I would not lose my faith in such men for anything the world could give me.") She is interested in meeting Elihu Burritt, "the learned blacksmith," whose "Olive Leaf Circles" are spreading anti-war propaganda among women all over the world. She inspects the reformatory schools of Aberdeen and a borough school for poor boys in London. She regrets that the desire to explore Windsor Castle prevents her joining a party to go down the Thames to bid farewell to a group of emigrants embarking for Australia under the patronage of the Colonization Loan Society. She is guest of honor at soirées of the Scottish Temperance League which has a movement afoot "for a law which shall secure to Scotland some of the benefits of the Maine law."

Church activities interest her as a matter of course. She attends Quaker meetings, the services of "Baptist Noel" and her host, the Reverend Mr. Binney, and Evensong at St. Paul's. The intoning at St. Paul's has an unpleasing, nasal quality which reminds her of the prayers and testifyings of Quakers and Methodists. "It is a curious fact that religious exercises, in all ages and countries have inclined

to this form of expression. It appears in the cantillation of the synagogue, the service of the cathedral, the prayers of the Covenanters." She is struck by the fact that English preaching does "not recognize the existence . . . of inquiry or doubt in the popular mind . . . in American sermons there is always more or less time employed in explaining, proving, and answering objections to, the truths enforced." English sermons are "fervent, affectionate, and evangelical in spirit" and deal to a considerable extent with "topics of practical benevolence." Indeed, as she writes Lyman Beecher, "The aspect of the religious mind of England is very encouraging in this respect; that it is humble, active, and practical . . . Churchman, Puseyite, Dissenter, Presbyterian, Independent, Quaker . . . I have . . . found among them all evidence of that true piety which consists in a humble and childlike spirit of obedience to God, and a sincere desire to do good to men . . . all are energizing together . . . to develop, from many outward forms, the one, pure, beautiful, invisible church of Christ."

In fact the general progress of humanitarianism since the eighteenth century fills her with enthusiasm:

Robert Walpole gayly intimated himself somewhat shocked at the idea that the nobility and the vulgar should be equally subject to the restraints of the Sabbath and the law of God. . . . In broad contrast to this . . . fashionable literature now arrays itself on the side of the working classes. . . . Instead of milliners and chambermaids being bewitched with the adventures of countesses and dukes, we now have fine lords and ladies hanging enchanted over the history of John the Carrier with his little Dot. . . . *Punch* laughs at everybody but the work people Prince Albert visits model lodging houses. . . . Lords

deliver lyceum lectures; ladies patronize ragged schools; committees of duchesses meliorate the condition of needle-women.

Outstanding among humanitarians is the Earl of Shaftesbury. When he entertains Mrs. Stowe at dinner, at his house in Grosvenor Square, he invites not only the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Tuam, but also a mulatto who has been consul at Liberia, a city missionary, a teacher in the "ragged schools," and the "patron of shoe-blacks." Subsequently he escorts her on a tour of his favorite charities: a group of model lodging-houses, public baths and wash-houses for the poor, the "ragged schools," the "ragged churches," and "a place for repentance" where boys who steal because they are hungry, have the opportunity to reform. Together they attend a service for the charity children at St. Paul's. "The children with white caps, white handkerchiefs, and white aprons, looked like a wide flower bed. The rustling, when they all rose up to prayer, was like the rise of a flock of doves, and when they chanted the church service, it was the warble of a thousand little brooks. . . . The elegant arches of St. Paul's could have no more beautiful adornment than those immortal flowers."

The Earl also provides Mrs. Stowe with documents relative to reforms that he has fostered: bills for the supervision of insane asylums, bills for the protection of chimney-sweeps, and bills to ameliorate the white slavery of industrialism. Women and children have been removed from the coal-pits and now work no more than ten and a half hours in the print works. Sunday work has been largely abolished in mines and factories. Milliners and

dressmakers are seldom kept at work all night during the London "season" and fewer of them die of tuberculosis. The poor laws have been reformed and the corn laws repealed. As proof that the people are cared for and know it, Lord Shaftesbury points to the fact that, in 1848, when all Europe was convulsed, England was as quiet and happy "as the President of the United States in his drawing-room."

Heading the list of more than one committee of women who have aided him in his reforms, is the name of the resplendent Duchess of Sutherland, who at Stafford House, her London home, assembles a notable gathering to do honor to Mrs. Stowe. At the latter's instigation, she also opens Stafford House for a concert at which the soloist is Miss Greenfield, "the Black Swan," who sings *Old Folks at Home*, giving one stanza in the soprano and the next in the tenor voice. Mingling with the aristocratic guests is the Reverend Samuel R. Ward, full-blooded African. Lord Shaftesbury declares that, in thus encouraging an outcast race, the Duchess is demonstrating "the true use of wealth and splendor."

Another conspicuous philanthropist is Lady Byron, widow of the poet. "No words addressed to me in any conversation hitherto have made their way to my inner soul with such force as a few remarks dropped by her on the present religious aspect of England," writes Mrs. Stowe of their meeting. Here, indeed, is a momentous encounter, freighted with consequences. How dream-fulfilling to come face to face with that romance, to touch the hand that other hand had touched! ("How strange it is that I

should *know* you—you who were a sort of legend of my early days!") But where is the legendary Pharisee? the marble-hearted woman whose obdurate, unforgiving silence had driven the poet into despairing exile? Lady Byron is the complete gentlewoman, with silvery hair under a widow's simple cap, dress of delicate lavender setting off "the transparent purity of her complexion," small white hand, a manner indicative of purity, gentleness, dignity and strength. Mrs. Stowe recalls Lord Byron's lines:

There was awe in the homage that she drew;
Her spirit seemed as seated on a throne.

The tragedy of her blighted love, a mystery still, envelops her in a golden cloud. And how perfectly she has borne it, seeking release from sorrow in a life devoted to the happiness of others! And—final touch—her health is fading, her life ebbing! Yet why should Mrs. Stowe "wish to detain here one whose home is evidently from hence and who will only fully live when the shadow we call life has passed away?"

It would never have occurred to Mrs. Stowe that the philanthropies of her English friends might be dictated by enlightened self-interest, or that their attitude toward the laboring classes and other underprivileged people might smack of pharisaical paternalism. Neither she nor they had learned to analyze the secret springs of charity. Her account of the reforms promoted by Lord Shaftesbury in England is intended as a reply to American pro-slavery critics who declared him a meddlesome hypocrite who ought to be taking care of English mill workers instead of

writing anti-slavery appeals to the women of America. She defends the Duchess of Sutherland from similar charges. The Earl of Shaftesbury is a noble, disinterested man, champion of the outcast and oppressed at the cost of great labor and in the face of invective and abuse from the powerful interests he is opposing. The Duchess, also, is "as good and true-hearted as beautiful and noble."

In fact, Mrs. Stowe is delighted with the Duchess, "a perfect woman nobly planned," handsome, exuberant, tall, blonde, full-lipped, and very English. "She embraces England, with its history, its strength, its splendor, its moral power, with an evident pride and affection which I love to see." A highly emotional woman, stirred to the depths by the pulpit oratory of the last chapters of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She is delighted with its author, too, and becomes her friend, carries her home informally for tea, invites her to visit the Sutherland estate in Scotland.

English people generally were pleased with Mrs. Stowe, at this time, however much they may have altered their opinions afterward. Like Mrs. Browning who met her three years later, they found her surprisingly simple, gentle, sweet-voiced, with no ambition to shine and no inclination to pose. Her pleasure in the great world of London had in it no touch of snobbishness. "I am always finding out, a day or two after, that I have been with somebody very remarkable, and did not know it at the time," she writes. "One has a strange mythological feeling about the existence of people of whom one hears for many years without ever seeing them." She moves among them much as she had moved in fancy among the creatures of Gesner's

Idyls in the Litchfield woodlands, jerking herself out of her dream, now and then, long enough to be amused at finding herself with such companions. Her comments on them are entirely uncritical. She describes their appearance, reports conversations, is impressed by their good health and youthfulness. Dickens, for one, is amazingly young. And the ladies, even the elderly ones, are to be excused for wearing low-cut evening gowns because they have kept their youthful figures and complexions. This is to be explained by outdoor exercise, no doubt, but even more by the fact that in England ladies do not do their own work, but can depend upon a servant class, well-trained, because permanent and hereditary. She is happy, moreover, to find all of the mythological creatures simple and friendly and domestic. "Domesticity is now the fashion in high life." The Queen has set the example by her care in training her children.

And yet they are glamorous. So are most things in the Old World. Mrs. Stowe has all of the contradictions of the American who has inherited the gentility virus. If her mind approves a democratic present and believes in moving on toward a future full of promise, her heart clings wistfully to the past and yearns for the elegance, the permanence, and the traditions of the older civilizations that her pioneer fathers had renounced.

She could amuse herself, during a fashionable dinner conversation on fox hunting, with reflections on the innate superiority of hunting in Indiana where it was a serious business and on the charms of the jolly backwoodsman who used his rifle to blow out his candle at bedtime. But,

on the other hand, at Stafford House, in the midst of an anti-slavery meeting, her eyes are captivated by the details of the drawing-room: the green damask walls, the gilding on the white furniture, the pattern of the green-velvet carpet, the Landseer over the fireplace, Thorwaldsen's statue of Eve and Canova's of Venus, the baskets of primroses in the windows, the green and gold and white of the garden outside. And at the luncheon which follows, she makes note not only of Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of the Duchess, but also of the flower-filled crystal and silver epergnes, the perfection of the service, the refinements of the cuisine, including plover's eggs served in the nest. While in modest English homes, she admires the English genius for comfort developed through centuries of living in one place and abetted by the sense of permanence and repose. "A man builds a house in England with the expectation of living in it and leaving it to his children; while we shed our houses in America as easily as a snail does his shell."

3

It was the yearning for elegance and permanence that accounted, at least in part, for the tenacity of the gentleman-and-scholar tradition in America, with its worship of Greek and Latin—never more pronounced than in the first half of the nineteenth century, when boys in village schools and log "colleges" dotted all over the country from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, pored over the classics, from sun-up to sun-down, and politicians got votes with

quotations from Homer and Horace. But it was the yearning for the riches of the older civilizations which also accounted, in part, for what, on the surface, appears to be the quite opposite drift toward Romanticism. If Romanticism in Europe was an effort to escape from the ugliness of industrialism and a vicarious adventure for the respectable middle-class, in America it was, in addition to these, a compensation to the genteel for the stringency and the rawness of colonial living. It is noteworthy that the romantic drift was strongest in New England. Not only was the German Romantic School introduced to us by the Transcendentalists of Boston, but the feudal tales of Sir Walter Scott were even more popular among the descendants of the Covenanters and Dissenters of Massachusetts and Connecticut, who should have resented them, than among the Virginia and Carolina aristocracy who molded their society on the feudal pattern.

Lyman Beecher and all of his children adored Walter Scott. He had made both Scotch and English history alive for them, so that for Mrs. Stowe on her journey a hundred landmarks are peopled with his creatures and echo his music. The "sun shines fair on Carlisle wall." The Black Douglas haunts the ruins of Bothwell. The name of Linlithgow station starts her out of a dream.

Of all the palaces so fair,
Built for the royal dwelling,
In Scotland, far beyond compare
Linlithgow is excelling.

As she draws near to Edinburgh, she exclaims,

Such dusky grandeur clothes the height,
Where the huge castle holds its state.

She passes "Mushats Cairn, where Jeanie Deans met Robertson, and Liberton, where Reuben Butler was a school-master. Nobody doubts, I hope, the historical accuracy of these points. . . . I wonder how many authors it will take to enchant our country from Maine to New Orleans, as every foot of ground is enchanted here in Scotland." She must visit Melrose Abbey by moonlight, Roslin Castle, and "classic Hawthornden." Abbotsford and Dryburgh are places of pilgrimage of which no detail escapes her. The flat stones of the pavement above Scott's grave are "a weight too heavy and too cold" to be laid on such a breast, but she gathers daisies and moss and sprigs of ivy from the near-by turf.

The Scotch, she is disappointed to learn, do not wholly share her devotion to Sir Walter or her enthusiasm for the feudal remains. Yet she understands that in his love of the past he hallowed institutions which the common people know to have been a burden. "One might naturally get a very different idea of a feudal castle by starving to death in the dungeon of it, than by writing sonnets on it at a picturesque distance." Indeed, she recognizes the need to explain the sad yearning with which she herself sees the ruins of a society "which one's reason wholly disapproves." And yet she believes that her "poetic admiration" for chivalry and feudalism is "not inconsistent with the spirit of Christ." For what one admires in the hero of the Middle Ages is his strength and courage and "high sense of personal honor."

Besides, all of the ivy-hung ruins and the ancient ghost-ridden houses are a boon to the artist, one denied the poor American:

Our Hawthorne . . . is obliged to get his ghostly images by looking through smoked glass at our square, cold realities; but one such old place as this (Speke Hall, a fortified house built about 1500) is a standing romance. . . . Since I have seen the material the poet and novelist has on this ground, all I wonder is, that there have not been a thousand poets to one . . . as plenty as the mavis and merle, and sprouting out every where, like the primroses and heather bells. . . . The poetic mind . . . has . . . a need for something old to cling to and germinate upon. The artistic temperament, too, is soft and sensitive.

How familiar it all sounds! Here is the plight of the American artist and the explanation of it. "The artistic temperament" among us has been "soft and sensitive," indubitably. That is one of the handicaps of a colonial civilization. In a pioneer society, the amount of sitting down requisite to the pursuit of most of the arts can be permitted only to those obviously unfitted for real work; so the tradition grows that art is for the womanish or the anemic. In America, literature in particular fell largely into the hands of the genteel, because in the beginning the gentlemen were not only also the scholars, but they and their ladies were our nearest approach to a leisure class. Their nostalgia for the treasures of Europe was inevitable. The daughter of Roxana Foote was only one of a long line of Americans to plod wistfully and earnestly to the graves of the poets and through art galleries and cathedrals, seeking to repair the link in the chain of their traditions, broken when their

ancestors migrated to a strange country. She was only one of many, also, to deplore the fact that her Protestant fathers had chosen not merely to break with their traditions but to destroy them.

What a pity, for instance, that they should have shattered the painted windows of Glasgow Cathedral, letting in a glare of light to reveal the rudeness of the architecture, "emblem of the cold . . . rationalism which has taken the place of the many-colored gorgeous mysticism of former times." Mrs. Stowe, like many another daughter of the Covenanters, was looking toward "a higher development of religion . . . when all the artistic faculties of the soul being wholly sanctified and offered up to God, we shall no longer shun beauty . . . as a temptation, but rather offer it up as a sacrifice to Him who has set us the example, by making everything beautiful in its season."

And yet she was out of sympathy with those who repudiated their dissenting ancestors for their ugliness and severity. They had been indispensable liberators. She might have recognized, also, that if she was lamenting the mysticism destroyed by rationalism, they had in the beginning sought the mysticism lost in formalism. The New Englander in becoming part of the Romantic movement, with its enthusiasm for the mysterious, was not turning his back on the Puritan fathers, but returning to their first principles.

For Mrs. Stowe, Romanticism is clearly, "*eine Passionsblume, die dem Blute Christi entsprossen*," in a sense not intended by Heine. All of her Romantic enthusiasms, whether for art or nature, as well as for humanitarianism,

are bound up with her religion. The human soul is "an imprisoned essence, striving after somewhat divine. . . . That ethereal power which shows itself in Greek sculpture and Gothic architecture, in Rubens, Shakespeare, and Mozart . . . that mystic quality . . . is a glimpse and intimation of what exists in Him . . . of whom all the glories of poetry and art are but symbols and shadows."

How much has she browsed among the Romantic theorists? Very little, probably. She has had little time for browsing. Perhaps Professor Stowe or Longfellow or Lowell whom she has recently met, has discussed them with her. She has some slight acquaintance with Goethe and Herder. Rousseau is hardly more than a name and a not too respectable one. She quotes Ossian and Wordsworth and Gray. Of the latter she writes, "He seems to have no practical vitality—to be only an echo, heard for a little, and then lost in silence, in himself a kind of elegy." The poetry of the past fifty years is the greatest—Scott's, of course, and Byron's, and probably, also, Wordsworth's, Mrs. Browning's and Tennyson's.

Of the older poets, she cares only for Shakespeare and Milton. Of these Shakespeare is greater by virtue of his Gothic originality. Milton in modeling his poetry on the ancients has so restrained his genius that his work, though majestic, is severe and cold. In Shakespeare, on the contrary, one finds:

. . . that wreathed involution of smiles and tears, of solemn earnestness and quaint conceits; those sudden uprushings of . . . sentiment, like the flame-pointed arches of cathedrals; those ranges of fancy, half goblin, half human; those complica-

tions of dizzy magnificence with fairy lightness; those streamings of many colored light; those carvings wherein every natural object is faithfully reproduced, yet combined into a kind of enchantment. . . .

There is never any end to the charms of Gothic architecture . . . each Gothic building is a record of the growth, character, and individuality of the builder's soul. . . . The arches of the cathedral seem . . . to have shot up like an enchantment . . . like the upward sweep of the soul in its loftiest moods of divine communion.

When the light shines through the painted windows and clouds of incense envelop the priests kneeling before the altar ablaze with candles, while the vault is filled with the waves of the chant and the organ, one can all but forgive the idolatries of Rome. "Surely there is some part in man that calls for such a service." Here are at least intimations of the mysticism lost to the religion of morality and philanthropy. But they are even more potent in "the inexpressibly sad beauty" of a Gothic ruin. "We, too, are desolate, shattered, and scathed; there are traceries and columns of celestial workmanship; there are heaven-aspiring arches, splendid colonnades and halls, but fragmentary all."

Gothic art is "Alpine . . . vast, wild, and sublime in its foundations, yet bursting into flower at every interval." But the Alps themselves are immeasurably more sublime than any art. Only in the Bible can Mrs. Stowe, "find vocabulary and images to express what the Swiss world of wonders excites. . . . The stern cloudy scenery answers to . . . the kindred mournfulness of the Book of Job. . . . The sun on the glaciers is like the overshadowing presence

of Jesus. . . . 'O that Thou wouldst rend the heaven, that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence.' " The valleys between remind her of Bunyan's "meadows beside the river of life, 'curiously adorned with lilies.' " Alpine flowers are earth's "raptures and aspirations," mysterious like everything else. She longs to be absorbed into the mystery and to gather it to herself.

God is the master artist from whom all must learn, and his masterpieces are on all horizons. The greatest of his pupils have found their inspiration close at hand, in their own countryside, within their own souls. "Would that our American artists would remember that God's pictures are nearer than Italy. . . . God send us an artist with a heart to reverence his own native mountains and fields, and to veil his face in awe when the great Master walks before his cottage door."

Yet she regrets that America is so poor in art galleries. In New England the people have not only suppressed the love of beauty as a stumbling block to piety, but have neglected it for practical efficiency. "Children are born there with a sense of beauty equally delicate with any in the world, in whom it dies a lingering death of smothered desire and pining, weary starvation. I know because I have felt it."

She seeks compensation in European galleries, lingering over paintings to absorb them. Although her previous knowledge of art has been gleaned largely from Anna Jameson, her reactions to it are thoroughly American. Whether they are good or bad is beside the point. They are what almost any American interested in art would

honestly feel, unless hybridized by European breeding. Her comments remind one, indeed, of those of the most popular, up-to-date, and American of contemporary critics.

Any cultivated person, though he may not pass judgment on technicalities, is entitled to decide whether he likes a picture or not. May he not judge a natural landscape, God's picture? Art for art's sake is frivolity. To determine the merit of a picture merely by the way the artist has handled the paint, the composition, the lights and shadows, is to miss the great purpose of painting—the revelation of the soul of the artist and of the power of God speaking through him. A painting is great in the measure of the artist's perception of great matters. It is possible to find pleasure in the naïve, unpretentious performance of the little people who delight in the skilful reproduction of onions and jewels and rich fabrics. Nor does Mrs. Stowe condemn the purely sensuous paintings of Titian and Correggio, as long as they keep to Greek mythology or earthly subjects. But when a man sets out to paint the Mother of God he must have had a vision of something more than a pretty woman.

Murillo's *Assumption of the Virgin*, for instance, which shows her "rising in a flood of amber light . . . looking upward . . . as in an ecstasy . . . is a *surface* picture, exquisitely painted—the feeling goes no deeper than the canvas." Raphael is disappointing in a similar way, except for the mother and child in the Sistine Madonna. In these he has penetrated into the innermost temple of sorrow, the most sacred mystery of Christianity. For the rest, he has painted beautiful pictures, too passionless in their seren-

ity to have more than a feeble grasp on her soul. If these two painters are negative, a positive offender is Correggio, a profaner of divine mysteries, who uses the birth of Christ to display his skill in chiaroscuro. For other reasons, she is out of sympathy with certain modern artists who believe that in avoiding the gorgeous colors of the old masters in favor of white, pale blue, and cloudy gray, they are discarding the sensual for the spiritual. "It seems probable that in the celestial regions there is more, rather than less, of brilliant coloring, than on earth."

In general, Romanism as a foundation for art has been worn threadbare. There, for instance, is a painting of "the fathers Gregory, Augustine, and Jerome, meditating on the immaculate conception of the Virgin. Think of a painter employing all his powers in representing such a fog bank! . . . If Jesus Christ should . . . walk through a gallery of paintings of sacred subjects, he would say again, as he did of old in the temple, "Take these things hence!"

Of the pictures she sees, she likes best those of Rembrandt and Rubens. She finds in the Rembrandts of the Louvre, "if not a commanding, a drawing influence, a full satisfaction for one part of my nature . . . a somber richness and mysterious gloom . . . appealing, because our life is a haunted one; the simplest thing is a mystery; the invisible world always lies round us like a shadow."

Rubens is her favorite. Longfellow had assured her, in spite of protest, that she would like Rubens. She has the genteel American's repugnance for his fat women; but of her first encounter with him in London, she writes,

"Rubens . . . whose pictures I detested with all the energy of my soul, I felt, by the very pain he gave me, to be a real artist." The coloring satisfies her eye better than that of any other painter. By the time she reaches him in the Louvre, he has become "the great, joyous, full-souled, all-powerful Rubens! . . . his women shall be fat as he pleases and you shall like him nevertheless." To Antwerp she goes specifically to see him. In one of the galleries she comes upon a Madonna—not the usual pale creature with eyes downcast—but "a gorgeous Oriental sultana . . . with full dark eye and jeweled turban and rounded outlines . . . on her hand a brilliant paroquet. Ludicrous . . . from a scriptural point of view, I liked it because there was life in it; because he had painted it from an internal sympathy, not from a chalky, second-hand tradition." *The Descent from the Cross* lifts her off her feet. "The real scene is forced home upon the heart. *Christ is dead* . . . I left this painting as one should leave the work of a great religious master—thinking more of Jesus and of John than of Rubens. . . . Art has satisfied me at last."

She does not discuss the lives of the painters; but no doubt she would be glad to know that Rubens was a moral man, hard-working, serious-minded, and domestic, just as she is anxious to believe that Shakespeare was moral and religious. Gay and dissipated in youth, perhaps, but in later years, a discreet, reputable householder, whose theology was as remarkable as his poetry, with "a strong and clear sense of man's moral responsibility and free agency and of future retribution." A genteel man, also. To be sure,

he wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; but that was to meet the taste of Elizabeth. When he pleased himself, he wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or depicted women of "lily-like purity," such as Desdemona, who could not "bring herself to speak the coarse word with which her husband taunts her." For no good American has learned to divorce the artist from his work. If we tolerate "temperament" and pass over weaknesses in silence for the sake of the beauty that remains, we still see the greatness of the artist's work itself impaired by the deficiencies of his character. Most of us are in sympathy with Mrs. Stowe's estimate of Titian, for instance, "sensuous, a Greek, but not of the highest class"; and like Charles Beecher and Mark Twain, after him, are repelled by the voluptuous intention in Titian's Greek goddesses of the Dresden Gallery. Such repulsions may discredit us, but we avow them none the less.

4

Mrs. Stowe did her picture-gazing chiefly on the Continent, in the Louvre, in the galleries of Dresden and Berlin, and in the churches of Antwerp. It was her first real opportunity, not merely because galleries had been lacking in her experience, but because leisure had been entirely so. In Paris, for the first time, her days were her own. "At last I have come into . . . the lotos-eater's paradise. . . . I am released from care; I am unknown, unknowing." She and Charles had taken pains to avoid any such reception

as that accorded them in England and Scotland. Only once in a Swiss village was there a demonstration. For the rest, they were tourists.

Years later Mrs. Stowe wrote of having visited in Parisian circles "where the artists, the scholars, the literary men and women visit"; but she gave few details. Her American hostess, an expatriate "Mrs. C.," introduced her to the salons of Mme. Mohl and Lady Elgin and took her to call upon the aged writer of popular verse, Béranger. She dined with M. and Mme. Belloc. M. Belloc, director of the Imperial School of Design, painted her portrait. Mme. Belloc had made the best French translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. With them she discussed poetry, art, and religion. M. Belloc, a "Greek," objected to Christianity because it had saddened the world. Mrs. Stowe argued that for her religion was not asceticism, but love of God that beautified and exalted common life. She looked about for Mme. George Sand, who had written so fervently of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and was shocked to learn that Mme. Sand's life was such that she was not received; "a female Lovelace," who had ruined Chopin and de Musset. Mrs. Stowe did not mention the great names of contemporary French letters. Victor Hugo was, of course, in exile. But Lamartine, poor and in ill favor with Napoleon III, was living in Paris. So were Taine and Sainte Beuve.

When Mrs. Stowe was relieved from all pressure from without, it became apparent that she had, after all, inherited a goodly share of Lyman Beecher's vigor. To be sure, the thin air at the Hospice of St. Bernard affected her unpleasantly, and the reaction from the Alps, aug-

mented by too much tobacco smoke on the crowded boat journeying up the Rhine, gave her a headache so that she must spend a day on her sofa at Heidelberg. But she could stroll and stand for hours in galleries, "skip up and down high places and steep places" in the Alps, as if "incapable of fatigue," walk nine miles on the rough road to Grindelwald and climb the steep to the Wartburg.

One would of course climb a much greater height for Luther's sake. She must visit all his shrines, in Frankfort, Wittenberg, Erfurt, and Eisenach, conjuring up his ghost and those of Catherine, his wife, and Melanchthon and Lucas Cranach. She looked for traces of Goethe, too, in Frankfort and Weimar. That was, perhaps, for Professor Stowe. Her own knowledge of Goethe seems to have been rather second-hand and her enthusiasm low. "Was Goethe so much, really, think you? That egotistical spirit shown in his *Diary* sets me in doubt."

By contrast how real to her and how near at hand was Lord Byron, particularly after meeting his widow. On Lake Lemman they dipped their oars where he had floated, rowing at sunset to his "little isle." They explored the Castle of Chillon where, by request, Mrs. Stowe wrote her name under Byron's on Bonnevard's pillar. In the Wengern Alps they quoted *Manfred* and on the Rhine, read *Childe Harold*.

In lieu of the modern camera, she went about, sketch-book and paint box in hand, sketching glaciers, wild flowers, and architectural fragments.

No doubt enthusiasm and unwonted freedom transported her. One imagines, also, that Charles Beecher had

something to do with it. A delightful companion, Charles—full of the spirit of play himself, refusing to be impressed by things that bored him, hurling rocks down the sides of the mountains to make a miniature avalanche, spending hours before single pictures in the Louvre; spending an evening in the Jardin Mabille, Champs-Élysées—no proper place for a Presbyterian minister, yet fairy-like with music and dancing. Waltzing was, no doubt, a sin, yet how beautiful under the Paris stars! If there was vice, he saw no trace, and music could atone for much. He must hear all of the music, dragging the weary Harriet to listen to Haydn in London, taking his Puritan conscience to a Romish service on the Sabbath that he might hear the organ in the Madeline. His musical taste was his own. Like a good American, he preferred the major to the minor key and thought church music in Boston superior to plain song at St. Paul's. But the bells of Antwerp wound him in a silver net and swung him into the clouds. In Geneva he bought a hundred-year-old Amati, an "enchanted thing," and for the rest of the journey was all but lost to other interests. The entries in his journal became more and more perfunctory and finally stopped altogether.

5

Back in Andover, the realization came to Mrs. Stowe with renewed force that she had become a public character with a public trust. She was still an object of controversy in the press; but although, as she wrote Lady Byron, "not insensible to the fiery darts" which flew around her, she

wrapped herself up in the consciousness of being on the right side. Even the *North American Review*, not favorable to discussions of slavery, had come out in defense of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a true picture of the institution, with a warning to slaveholders to mend their ways. The statements in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was selling extensively in the South, remained undisputed. If the fact that she had been hobnobbing with the British aristocracy was a subject for jeers from the opposition, Cassius M. Clay was no doubt correct in his belief that it would help to make abolitionism fashionable in America, particularly among the young. All that was said against her helped to draw attention to the slavery issue itself. Moreover, she had brought home a considerable sum of money which must be used for the cause. One can imagine how many people were eager to aid her in discharging that responsibility.

The three years following her return from Europe must have been full to overflowing. Her biographers speak of a multitude of visitors to the old stone house. She herself has left us records of visits from two famous colored people, Frederick Douglass and that weird, half-crazy, half-prophetic phenomenon, Sojourner Truth. The latter spent several days with the Stowes, in the fall of 1853, when Lyman Beecher was also visiting them. How he must have enjoyed her! He was seventy-eight, had retired from Lane Seminary, and was living in Boston. No doubt his memory, which toward the end failed him altogether, was already fading. In any case, his children felt that the time had come to garner his recollections before it was too late.

So he sat by the open fire in Hattie's sitting-room and talked his autobiography, while Charles Beecher wrote it down.

Charles Stowe records, also, an enormous correspondence carried on by his mother, between the years 1853 and 1856. Nearly all of it is lost to us, so that we are left guessing at the substance from the fragments that remain. No doubt much of it was concerned with the spending of the thousands of dollars donated by the British to the anti-slavery cause. Letters to William Lloyd Garrison, on anti-slavery stationery with pictures of slaves on the envelopes, mention a series of anti-slavery sermons by Edward Beecher which Mrs. Stowe is having printed for distribution among the clergy; a series of lectures in Boston which she will subsidize to the extent of twenty-five dollars each, with Lyman Beecher, Calvin Stowe, Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, and Garrison himself as potential speakers; engravings which she has had made of Richmond's portrait of herself and sends to Garrison to sell "for the benefit of Freeman." A gentleman in Hartford had paid five dollars for one toward the redemption of Miss Carrol's slaves.

She was never entirely reconciled to Garrison. She did not like his indifference toward the Union. And why should he quarrel with Frederick Douglass over methods of abolishing slavery? Were they not all working toward the same end? And how much more speedily would they arrive there if all pulled together. His religious views, also, were too heretical even for a Beecher, and his irreverent criticisms of the Bible, spread on the pages of *The Lib-*

erator, were in danger of robbing poor Uncle Tom of faith in his only Comforter. She took him to task in a series of letters.

During the Kansas-Nebraska conflict, although she told her Brooklyn friends, the John T. Howards, that women could do nothing about it but keep their husbands awake nights with their sighing and groaning, she herself not only contributed *Dred*, as anti-slavery propaganda, but also published an open letter to the women of America urging activities upon them which shed light upon her own. Women should circulate petitions to Congress (alas for the precepts of Catharine Beecher!), distribute tracts, subsidize lectures. Her glimpse of autocracy in Europe, particularly of the régime of Napoleon III, had aroused her to the imminence of tyranny, the precariousness of liberty, everywhere. She had, too, the abolitionist's sense of a cataclysm impending. "We are on the eve of a conflict which will try men's souls. . . . For the sake of outraged and struggling liberty throughout the world, let every woman in America now do her duty."

Her pen was not idle on other subjects. In 1855, she published a new edition of *The Mayflower* with twenty-one additional sketches and seven poems, and a revision of the geography first printed in 1835.

The geography is, in some respects, a curious document. Like the original, it was prepared at the behest of Catharine Beecher, who wrote the introduction and also had some share in preparing the text. In the same year that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared, Catharine had founded the American Woman's Educational Association with the help

of which she was now promoting schools for girls in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dubuque, Iowa and Quincy, Illinois. She had use for the geography. It furnished Harriet an opportunity for instilling anti-slavery principles into the young. The section on the southern United States is headed "Southern or Slave States," and deals with them accordingly. South Carolina is to be remembered as having "a greater number of slaves, in proportion to its inhabitants than any other." It was also an occasion for teaching republican doctrines in the chapter on governments, and Christianity in the chapter on religions. Current psychology would no doubt make something of the chapter on religions. In any case it would be interesting to know whether Catharine or Harriet was responsible for the method of inculcating the idea that "God is Love." The chapter is almost wholly devoted to heathen atrocities and a more revolting lot would be hard to find. What subterranean distemper released itself in writing of horrors? Mrs. Stowe, on the testimony of all who knew her, was the kindest and gentlest of women.

6

In midsummer of 1856, Mrs. Stowe returned to England to secure an English copyright for *Dred* and to take a vacation at the same time. There were people and things that she wished to see again and others that she had missed seeing on her first trip. With her went the Professor, the twins, Henry Stowe, and Mary Beecher (Mrs. Thomas Perkins).

The second English sojourn was devoted largely to visits. The first was with the Duke and Duchess of Argyll at Inverary Castle. At a railway station on the way, they encountered—by prearrangement—the royal family. The Queen was amiable, Prince Albert bowed politely four times, and the four royal children stared with round blue eyes. At Inverary, where they spent a week, they were much impressed by the pious, domestic atmosphere. Every morning, at half-past nine, the Duke read the Bible and prayers in the dining-hall, the servants standing in a line on one side, the guests seated in a row on the other, the Duchess and her nine children—"a perfectly beautiful little flock"—in the center.

A similar atmosphere enveloped them at Dunrobin Castle where the Duchess of Sutherland read prayers daily in the midst of servants and guests, with "a manner full of grand and noble feeling." The Duchess was delighted to see Mrs. Stowe and dashed off with her in her carriage. She had already marked her favorite passages in *Dred*, while the Duke was impressed by the hymns which Mrs. Stowe had quoted and begged a Plymouth hymn-book. They were both absorbed in American politics for America was "a ship freighted with the world's goods." Their estate was a garden, the people prosperous, they themselves, amiable, Christian, and considerate to every one. Mrs. Stowe was at a loss to understand the letters, both private and printed, which urged her, as a philanthropist and champion of the slave, to make use of her stay at Dunrobin to observe the evils of the feudal system.

At Dunrobin Mrs. Stowe renewed acquaintance with

Lady Mary and Mr. Labouchere, sister and brother-in-law of the Duchess, who invited her to visit them at Stoke Park. In the midst of her stay with them, they are summoned to Windsor to dine with the Queen. How like a story-book to see them start off, Mr. Labouchere in knee-breeches with diamond buckles, Lady Mary in rose-embroidered white silk. What fun to hear their report afterward! How the Queen talked about *Dred*; how she grieved over Nina and railed at Tom Gordon; how she inquired about the health of Lyman Beecher and Henry Ward and Mrs. Stowe herself.

No doubt about Mrs. Stowe's enjoyment of queens and lords and ladies and castles. But it was the artless, disinterested enjoyment of a child in a fairy story. She got quite as much, if not more, from visits to Mrs. Gaskell and Charles Kingsley. Before the open fire in Kingsley's comfortable parlor, she discussed books and religion for three days. Kingsley knew as much about theological turmoil as the Beechers did; but he had come out of his own a zealous member of the Church of England. As for Mrs. Gaskell, she was not only a good writer, but a good minister's wife and housekeeper, as well.

In September, Professor Stowe returned to Andover; and a few weeks later after sight-seeing in Durham and York, Henry followed him to enter the freshman class at Dartmouth College. Henry, who was eighteen, had arrived at the unfortunate age, afterward described with sympathy by his mother, when a boy "has all of the desires of the man and none of the rights . . . a triple share of nervous intensity . . . and no definitely perceived objects on which

to bestow it . . . a blind desire to go contrary to everything that is commonly received among older people. The boy disparages the minister, quizzes the deacon, thinks the schoolmaster an ass, and doesn't believe in the Bible, and seems to be rather pleased than otherwise with the shock and flutter that all these announcements create." That he was still unregenerate, religiously speaking, had not felt equal to declaring himself a Christian, troubled her. But the way he had been drinking toasts in plain water at English dinners augured well for future sobriety. He seemed to appreciate the extraordinary advantages of his English tour and went off in gratitude promising to do well and to be a comfort to his parents.

Mrs. Stowe, the twins, and her sister Mary continued on their way. At some time during the journey they must have met Ruskin. He himself wrote later of having traveled with them in Switzerland from Chamonix to Basle, in 1856; but Mrs. Stowe's letters place that experience in the summer of 1859. However, in 1857, he wrote Charles Eliot Norton of being amused by Mrs. Stowe's behavior at Durham, where she had chosen to go in a boat on the river rather than examine rare manuscript books in the cathedral library—inexplicable to Ruskin, because of the beauty of the books and the insignificance of the river. Before returning to America, she visited his gallery of Turner's at Denmark Hill. Ruskin, who was thirty-seven, was at that time obscure by comparison with Harriet Beecher Stowe. He had published several volumes of *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *Stones of Venice*, which, if Mrs. Stowe had read, she must have

found congenial. Although he had not yet turned from art to humanitarianism, he was already at work on *Political Economy of Art* and was being attacked and ridiculed for his alchemistic endeavor to weave ethics with æsthetics. Mrs. Stowe, like most Americans, would have been quite as sympathetic with that Utopian enterprise as she was with his love of Gothic and Sir Walter Scott.

In November, the Stowes went to Paris, where they settled down for the winter to study French and to take up the threads of social intercourse that Mrs. Stowe had dropped with reluctance, three years earlier. She was happy to find that the French had by no means forgotten Uncle Tom. He not only inspired the school children of the Faubourg St. Antoine to give half their lunch money to Mrs. Stowe for the slave, but had also led many of the poor to Christ. *Dred* was popular, too, and well received by *La Revue des Deux Mondes* and *La Presse*, a welcome contrast to the *London Times*, the *Athenæum*, and the *Edinburgh Review*, which disparaged it, despite its enormous English sale and the Queen's approval.

At the studio of Baron de Triqueti, Miss Durant modeled what Mrs. Stowe's friends considered the best likeness of her in marble. One of the twins went with her for the sittings and wrote about them, afterward. "The dim light, the marble dust and chippings covering the floor, the chink, chink of the chisels, and Miss Durant, tall, handsome and animated, before the mound of clay which, day by day, grew into a resemblance to my mother, and Baron de Triqueti coming and going with kindly, smiling face and

friendly words, and my gentle little mother smiling, happy, and unconscious as a child."

In such felicity she went on to Italy with Mary, in the spring, leaving the twins at a Protestant school in Paris, where, although she did not know it at the time, they were to remain for over two years. Italy got into her bones as it does with Englishmen and Anglo-Americans. Venice is the romanticists' paradise; but Rome—"Rome is a world! Rome is an astonishment! Papal Rome is an enchantress!" Impossible in Rome during Holy Week not to feel with a touch of shame that the grip of the New England meeting-house is relaxing. Rome was, as usual, full of English people—five thousand of them—of whom Mrs. Stowe was particularly interested in Mrs. Gaskell, John Bright, and Jacob Abbot. But she must go to Florence to see the Brownings.

Of the two it was Mrs. Browning who attracted her. Robert Browning was still an enigma. His wife's work, on the other hand, had long been popular and was almost complete. They did not welcome the prospect of a visit from Mrs. Stowe, although Mrs. Browning had been impressed by the extent to which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had moved the world for good. Neither her Puritan background nor the American brand of provincialism recommended her. Besides, as a reformer she would, no doubt, be pertinacious and self-assertive. They were pleasantly surprised. She was more "refined" and less American than they had feared. Nor was there anything in her simple earnest manner to suggest that she was aware of being

famous. Her dusky, wavy hair made her attractive to look at, too, although her brow was not capacious and her mouth neither so frank nor so sensitive as the Brownings could have wished. But what could one see in a morning's visit? Later they were more enthusiastic.

7

But of all Mrs. Stowe's encounters on her second trip to Europe, the one which made history was with Lady Byron. The two had corresponded since their first meeting. Mrs. Stowe no doubt welcomed the opportunity for closer acquaintance afforded by their mutual interest in two famous fugitive slaves, William and Ellen Crafts. She had also wished to know more of Lady Byron's religious views. The latter had arrived at a point of heterodoxy not uncongenial to the Beechers. "I look upon creeds of all kinds as chains—far worse chains than those you would break—as the cause of much hypocrisy and infidelity," she wrote. "I may not have time to grow wiser; and I must therefore leave it to others to correct the conclusions I have now formed from my life's experience. I should feel happy to discuss them personally with you; for it would be *soul to soul*."

What subtle flattery! What an exciting prospect! The hope of seeing Lady Byron was one of the brightest held out by the second trip to Europe—one which Mrs. Stowe hastened to fulfil upon her arrival in London.

Everything was as the genteel New Englander delights to find it. By the bedside of Lady Byron who was invalided,

"stood a table covered with books, pamphlets, and files of letters, all arranged with exquisite order. . . . She still directed with systematic care, her various works of benevolence, and watched with intelligent attention the course of science, literature, and religion; and the versatility and activity of her mind, the flow of brilliant and penetrating thought on all the topics of the day, gave to the conversations of her retired room a peculiar charm."

She was concerned over the Kansas-Nebraska issue and gave Mrs. Stowe fifty pounds for the sufferers in Kansas. The time she felt was opportune for publishing *Dred*, particularly in England, where it would catch the floating fund of English sympathy newly released from absorption in the career of Florence Nightingale. After reading *Dred* she wrote, "Your book, dear Mrs. Stowe, is of the 'little leaven' kind. . . . If there is truth in what I heard Lord Byron say, that works of fiction *lived* only by the amount of *truth* which they contained, your story is sure of long life."

So, Lord Byron, too, would have approved the book! The reference to him was an opening for a conversation at their next meeting. Lady Byron "seemed pleased to continue the subject, and went on to say many things of his singular character and genius, more penetrating and more appreciative than is often met with among critics." Mrs. Stowe replied that she "had been from childhood powerfully influenced by him" and began to tell how she had prayed for his soul among the daisies and wild strawberries in the Litchfield meadows; but Lady Byron interrupted.

"I know all that," she said, "I heard it from Mrs. —"

and it was one of the things that made me wish to *know* you. I think *you* could understand him!"

They talked for some time of him then, Lady Byron "with her pale face slightly flushed, speaking, as any other great man's widow might, only of what was purest and best in his works, and what were his virtues . . . especially in early life."

But this was only the beginning. Soon afterward, Lady Byron invited all of the Stowes to luncheon and endeared herself particularly, by her graciousness, to the twins and Henry. Present also was Lord Ockham, Lady Byron's grandson, whose eccentricities she analyzed with remarkable benevolence. "He had a body that required a more vigorous animal life than his station gave scope for, and this had often led him to seek it in what the world calls low society." In such wise did she devote herself "to the task of guarding those whom the world condemned, and guiding them to those higher results of which she often thought that even their faults were prophetic."

The intimacy progressed excitingly. Before Mrs. Stowe left for Paris, Lady Byron issued still another invitation. She wished to converse with Mrs. Stowe alone upon a subject of importance. The latter, accompanied by Mary, arrived for a brief visit to find Lady Byron on one of her "well days," moving about her house "with her usual air of quiet simplicity . . . full of little acts of consideration for all about her. . . . There were with her two ladies of her most intimate friends, by whom she seemed to be regarded with a sort of worship. When she left the room for a moment, they looked after her with a singular ex-

pression of respect and affection, and expressed freely their admiration of her character, and their fears that her unselfishness might be leading her to over-exertion." From this company she drew Mrs. Stowe away for a whole afternoon of private conversation.

The subject was not entirely new. "A lady who had enjoyed Lady Byron's friendship had already stated the case generally." But we have a way of shaking off discreditable gossip about our idols as surmises distorted and enlarged upon by frivolous or malicious tongues. Because Byron had sinned—and had not he himself declared it?—the hide-bound society that had cast him out believed him guilty of all sins, even that from which they shrank with greatest loathing. And was not that society itself to blame? A Christian community which teaches its young men Ovid and Anacreon when it should be teaching them the Bible has no right to be shocked when one of them comes out in English with *Don Juan*.

How utterly different to hear from the idol's wife—herself an idol, first by reflected glory and then in her own right—"Mrs. Stowe, he was guilty of incest with his sister!"

What a recoil from the viper one has cherished in one's bosom! And where should one turn for comfort if not to her who has suffered in like manner and a hundred-fold? Particularly when she herself is seeking comfort and—more flattering still—advice? What a salve to wounded pride if from the ruins of the old worship a spotless saint arises! Lady Byron, too, when dying, prayed for her enemies. Lord Byron's sins:

. . . admitted of much palliation and excuse . . . the child of singular and ill-matched parents . . . he had only the worst and most fatal influences. . . . The manners of his day were corrupt . . . drinking, gaming, and licentiousness everywhere abounded. . . . The excesses of passion . . . wrought effects on him that they did not on less sensitively organized frames He never outlived remorse. . . . She felt sure he had finally repented and added with great earnestness, "I do not believe that any child of the heavenly Father is ever left to eternal sin."

This was a radical view of salvation that even Mrs. Stowe feared was dangerous. Not half so dangerous, asserted Lady Byron, as the belief in eternal punishment. It was the latter that had made Lord Byron desperate, the Calvinistic fatalism absorbed in youth, the early view of himself as damned in any case, which he could never shake off, that had made him increasingly reckless and defiant.

A new, cheap edition of his works was about to be printed for circulation among the common people. His glamorous falsehoods had already demoralized the English to such an extent that it was strongly impressed upon her mind that he must suffer in looking on the evil consequences of what he had done in this life and in seeing the further extension of that evil; that he could not be at peace until this injustice had been righted. Might it not be her duty to break the silence she had so long maintained upon the causes of their separation and make a full disclosure before she left the world and went to meet him? What did Mrs. Stowe advise?

It was not the first time that Lady Byron had disclosed the secret of her separation from the poet. The story must

for years have been whispered among her intimates. Mrs. — had whispered it to Mrs. Stowe. Why was Mrs. Stowe singled out, called into conference, deliberately and purposefully? Because she had worshiped at the Byron shrine? "It was one of the things that made me wish to *know* you. I think *you* could understand him." Who shall judge the mingled motives for destroying the altar? If Lady Byron was seeking a worshiper of her own, she found one. Mrs. Stowe departed in an ecstasy from which she never recovered. She carried Lady Byron's problem with her to the Continent and at night consulted Mary about the solution. Sensible Mary pointed out that while the truth might need telling, the consequences would be disastrous for the teller. Pleasanter for Lady Byron that she should bequeath the task to another.

In the eight meetings of the two women now on record, how much did Mrs. Stowe learn of Lady Byron's relations to other people, of her quarrels with her daughter and Anna Jameson, her troubles with her grandson and her servants? Of her moods, what William Howitt called her "frozen fits," during which she was utterly unapproachable and unreasonable, Mrs. Stowe had one experience. But here is what she says of it:

She could not see me at first; and when, at last she came, it was evident that she was in a state of utter prostration. Her hands were like ice; her face was deadly pale; and she conversed with a restraint and difficulty which showed what exertion it was for her to keep up at all. . . . In a state of health which would lead most persons to become helpless absorbents of services from others, she was assuming burdens, and making outlays of her vital powers in acts of love and service, with a

generosity that often reduced her to utter exhaustion. But none who knew or loved her ever misinterpreted the coldness of those seasons of exhaustion. We knew that it was *not* the spirit that was chilled, but only the frail mortal tabernacle.

Mrs. Stowe understood such weariness from experience. Was not she herself reproached for spells of abstraction and indifference to those around her, when she sought release in apathy or lost herself in dreams?

On the way back to America in June of 1857, Mrs. Stowe spent a day in London with Lady Byron, who was lovelier than ever, and bade farewell with "a strange . . . yearning, throbbing feeling . . . a longing to send you something . . . a cup of primroses, a funny little pitcher . . . a vase for violets and primroses . . . when you use them think . . . that I love you more than I can say. . . . Good-by, dear, dear friend, and if you see morning in our Father's house before I do, carry my love to those that wait for me, and if I pass first, you will find me there, and we shall love each other *forever*."

If an image long cherished had been shattered, so that she could never again assemble the pieces into a semblance of its beauty, another had taken its place. The friendship with Lady Byron was a high point in Mrs. Stowe's experience, an emotional satisfaction more complete, perhaps, than any she had known. Here, perchance, might be the sustaining, sheltering affection that Harriet Beecher had sought so long.

If so, she shortly had need of it. Less than a month after her return to Andover, Henry Stowe was drowned in the Connecticut River.

❧ VI ❧

THE BURDEN OF FAME



THE OLD HOME AT HARTFORD

I

WHAT, after all, is the boasted illumination of the nineteenth century," said Lyman Beecher, "but an accumulation of doubtful doubts?"

Impossible that the Beechers should have escaped them. Twenty years later, Mrs. Stowe described Henry Ward as a student of Huxley, Spencer, and Darwin; Professor Stowe, delving into German literature, had already encountered not only Goethe but "higher criticism" of the Bible, also; and Mrs. Stowe herself was aware that Jonathan Edwards, in bringing reason to bear upon his doctrines, had pointed the way to reasoning one's self out of them as far, indeed, as the nebulous positions of Emerson and Theodore Parker.

To doubt is one of the privileges of the liberated and liberation was preëminently the watchword of the nineteenth century—a period of freedom following upon a period of authority, growing out of man's increasing faith in himself, at once cause and result of scientific progress,

of the belief in progress generally, of the growth of democracy. It culminated in such work as Karl Pierson's *Grammar of Science* wherein man discovered that he was not only the interpreter but the creator of natural law itself. Others besides Henry Adams were appalled by such a revelation and left impotent and fearful in an empty universe. Much earlier, Goethe had gone the full cycle in his own experience, from the Storm and Stress *Prometheus* defying the Gods he has made to the labyrinthine searchings of the later *Faust* after something immutable upon which to rest his impotent being. *Faust*, a preshadowing of nineteenth-century turmoil, was, like the old *Faust Buch* on which it was founded, the epic of an age that had, in the end, lost faith in itself. Simpler souls pondering the accumulation of doubtful doubts, sought simpler solutions.

From scheme and creed the light goes out,
The saintly fact survives:
The blessed Master none can doubt
Revealed in holy lives.

Thus Whittier, speaking for the religion of morality and philanthropy. Mrs. Stowe herself might have uttered the lines; but neither she nor Whittier was satisfied to drop the matter at that point. The holy lives were sustained by mystical communion with the Master—an emotional experience. Yet the middle-class, American Protestant must eventually revert to his reason and evolve a fresh creed. On what authority? The Bible? A book open for any man's interpretation since the days of Jonathan Edwards! The Beechers had been interpreting it all their lives.

In the desolation following upon the death of Henry Stowe, his mother knew again the necessity for having her creed clearly before her. She must trace its pattern, repeat its formulas, see it grounded in ultimate authority.

Not at first, perhaps. In the first shock and bewilderment one clutches at external props. Friends gather around. One is occupied with the hundred material details of bereavement. The Stowes must go to Dartmouth to gather images of Henry's days there—his room, his boat with flag furled and tied with crape, even the spot where he was drowned—to hear him praised by his classmates, ill-at-ease in their sympathy, awed, as classmates always are, by the inexplicable presence of death in the stronghold of their impregnable youth. Afterward, there was Henry's grave to be planted with grass, with pansies, white immortelles, petunias, and verbenas; and his room in the Andover house to be enshrined, with his portrait on the wall, smiling assurance to her of the mansions in the Father's house; and his treasures to be wept over and set in order. The seal ring she had given him was broken across his name! An omen? A Scotch plaid, gift of the Duke of Sutherland, reminded her to be glad that she had had the foresight to take Henry on the trip to England, that she had shared with him that halcyon experience! She must write to the Duchess who would understand, for she had been similarly bereaved; and to Lady Byron whose life had been "one long crucifixion."

Letters that must be written were indeed an outlet through which the Beecher gift of words could carry away a considerable burden of grief. In them, as in conversation,

she could lull herself with time-hallowed formulas. God had taken Henry where he would be spared the trials of life and where his spirit, dwelling among the blessed, would be a guide and stay, a link with the life beyond to those who loved him. To be sure, Henry had never declared himself a Christian; but his life had been upright, his purposes high. God who had made mothers' hearts would understand and be merciful. Even the Professor, who was "prostrate" and spent hours at Henry's grave, could rise to the occasion like other moody, apprehensive people, when trouble actually caught up with him, and mount into the Andover pulpit of a Sunday to declare that "the mysteries of God's ways with us must be swallowed up by the greater mystery of the love of Christ."

In the Stowes' garden sat Lyman Beecher, eighty-two, listening in the Great Silence for the voice of Roxana, "not separated by a thin partition but standing at the door." What thoughts did the patriarchal image evoke? Merely a flash of annoyance that the old man had probably left his false teeth in the Boston stage and that little Charley, the second, must be sent to the stage-driver's to fetch them? Or was he a reminder that if—as Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote her—she could never get the iron of Calvinism out of her soul, iron was not weight merely, but ballast and reinforcement as well?

Soon the friends had all gone about their own business, the letters were all written, nothing was left to do for Henry's mortal remains, the summer waned. In the tide of bitterness that suddenly welled within, it was a relief to feel bodily illness and to give way to it. No doubt a trip,

a change of scene, the salt air at Brunswick would be beneficial. It always made her feel easier to move from place to place. Brunswick was still inhabited by diverting Yankee individualists. Mrs. Upham's house was surrounded by flowers. Mrs. Upham was a serene companion with whom, on the rocky shore, one could watch the northern lights of evenings and feel restlessness absorbed in the restless sea. The pointed firs, the silver fingers of the bay beckoned as of old. Maquoit and Middle Bay harbored the ghosts of children playing, among whom Henry's was as real as the rest. In the languor that came upon her the spirit world seemed near and the words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," sadly sweet.

But the bleak confinement of the Andover winter brought a sense of thwarted purposes, of loneliness, of futility, in which religion was not merely a conventional prop, but also an object against which to direct rebellion, an absorbing intellectual diversion, and an emotional outlet. Mrs. Stowe revolved in her mind Calvinistic tenets, half discarded, and found it a relief to be able to blame them for her uncertainty about the future of Henry, hurried into Eternity without warning or preparation. It was no doubt the hard old doctrines taught in her youth that made it so difficult to go on believing in the goodness of God in the face of her own unhappiness and the wretchedness of the world, which seemed, indeed, proof enough that the doctrines were true, that eternal suffering might be the reasonable expectation of mankind. But if this were all, it would be impossible to love and praise God. If the soul of Henry was to be eternally damned, her own must be

doubly so for its rebellion against a being who had thus ordered the universe. It was imperative to find some interpretation of life upon which resignation was possible. If Calvinism inculcated belief in a fearful order, the order presupposed intelligence behind it and ultimate reasonableness. To be resigned to the order one had only to discover the reasonableness. Calvinism itself pointed the way. The doctrine of the Atonement came readily to mind and sorrow became for her once more a sacrament:

There is but one thing remaining . . . the cross of Christ. . . . Sorrow is divine. Sorrow is reigning on the throne of the universe, and the crown of all crowns has been one of thorns. . . . Glory in tribulation . . . so we may be associated with that great fellowship of suffering of which the Incarnate God is the head, and through which He is carrying a redemptive conflict to a glorious victory over evil. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.

So man hugs his pain until it has become hardly distinguishable from the pangs of pleasure. If such behavior is inexplicable, it is human, none the less. Calvinism, which the nineteenth century was to repudiate with increasing vehemence, had been a convenient and reasonable device for sublimating it. Thanks to the faith of her youth, Harriet Beecher Stowe was in a more comfortable position, not only to resolve doubtful doubts, but to meet the disasters and shoulder the burdens that were so large a part of her life, than, for instance, was Henry Adams. Calvinistic iron was an important element in the unshakable serenity which, according to those who knew her, distinguished her old age.

In the unhappy winter of 1857-58, she must write out the thoughts in which she sought to reconcile the Calvinistic world of her experience with the doctrine that God is Love. To whom better than to Lady Byron who knew so much about religion and had had so much experience of atonement? For in her concern for Henry's soul, Mrs. Stowe had not forgotten that other whose salvation was a thousand times more problematic.

"I did long to hear from you at a time when few knew how to speak, because I knew that *you* had known everything that sorrow can teach." (Had Mrs. Stowe heard from others that Lady Byron was ill? Or was she forced to explain to herself a silence which must have been a gnawing disappointment?) Her letter continues:

I believe that the Lamb, who stands forever "in the midst of the throne, as it had been slain," has everywhere His followers—those who seem sent into the world, as He was, to suffer for the redemption of others. . . .

I often think that God called you to this beautiful and terrible ministry when He suffered you to link your destiny with one so strangely gifted and so fearfully tempted. Perhaps the reward that is to meet you when you enter within the veil . . . will be to see *that* spirit, once chained and defiled, set free and purified. . . .

I think increasingly on the subject on which you conversed with me once—the future state of retribution. It is evident to me that the spirit of Christianity has produced in the human spirit a tenderness of love which wholly revolts from the old doctrine on this subject. . . . And yet . . . it was *Christ* who said, "Fear Him that is able to destroy soul and body in hell". . . .

But of one thing I always feel sure: probation does not end

with this present life; and the number of saved may therefore be infinitely greater than the world's history leads us to suppose.

I think the Bible implies a great crisis, a struggle, an agony, in which God and Christ and all the good are engaged in redeeming from sin.

The letter was so important and satisfactory to Mrs. Stowe that she preserved and printed it later. It was over a year before Lady Byron answered. Then she sent Mrs. Stowe a letter by one of the fugitive slaves in whom both had been interested in England. Without a good deal of reading between lines it must have been disappointing. It refers briefly to Mrs. Stowe's bereavement. "The words I would have uttered *at one time* were like drops of blood from my heart. Now I sympathize with the calmness you have gained, and can speak of your loss as I do of my own. . . . As long as *they* are in God's world, they are in ours. I ask no other consolation." It continues with a discussion of the probable effects of the financial panic of 1857 on slavery and of Ruskin's contribution to the Gothic mania, and concludes with a query about Mrs. Stowe's activities and a suggestion. "Might not a biography from your pen bring forth again some great, half-observed soul to act on the world?" (What half-observed soul? Perhaps Lady Byron.)

Three months later Lady Byron wrote again in reply to a letter from Mrs. Stowe introducing a friend. Lady Byron and her granddaughter were reading Mrs. Stowe's new novel, published serially in the *Atlantic Monthly*. "More power in these few numbers than in any of your former

writings, relating, at least, to my own mind." She was also anticipating a visit from the author.

2

The summer of Henry Stowe's death had seen the founding of the *Atlantic Monthly*, through the efforts of Francis Henry Underwood and Phillips, Sampson and Company, publishers of *Dred* and *Sunny Memories*, with Lowell for editor and Motley, Longfellow, and Holmes for contributors. Knowing the commercial value of Mrs. Stowe's name, the publishers sought her coöperation, also, as soon as she returned from her second trip to Europe. To the first number she contributed "The Mourning Veil," an allegory out of her own experience. The mourning veil must be worn by a mother whose child has been burned to death. "Until one has seen the world through a veil like that one has never truly lived." In her desk was the beginning of her "Maine story," written five years earlier; but it described a shipwreck at Kennebec and the burial of a drowned seaman on Orr's Island, a melancholy tale of melancholy places, entwined with memories of Henry. As she dwelt upon them, her lost hopes for him rose up to dim her eyes and choke her thoughts. She put the manuscript aside.

But in the year that followed, as she brooded over her religion, her religious conceptions began to embody themselves in the persons of a story. *The Minister's Wooing* began in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1858, and

appeared in book form, the following summer. Like nearly all of Mrs. Stowe's books, it had a large sale, went through many editions, and was the object of controversy. It fell upon a period of heightened religious interest growing out of the public distress which accompanied the financial panic of 1857. The public having momentarily lost faith in itself and in material progress, was impelled to revert to authority, to seek comfort in traditional beliefs, to reach out after a Divine Providence upon whom to rest the burdens of its own failure. *The Minister's Wooing* recalled their ancient faith. Gladstone called it a "beautiful and noble picture of Puritan life . . . exhibited upon a pattern felicitous beyond example." But the ancient faith had been so modified to meet Mrs. Stowe's needs, that while comforting to those who, like her, were trying to reconcile the text, "God is Love," with the wretchedness of the sinning world, it seemed little short of blasphemous to Old School Presbyterians, still fighting to prevent "faith" from being supplanted by "works."

The scene is late eighteenth-century Newport. The minister is Samuel Hopkins, apostle of Jonathan Edwards's "New Divinity," who in the twilight of the New England theocracy is struggling to maintain his spiritual independence and assert his spiritual authority against the wealthy Pharisees of his congregation. "The only mistake made by the good man was that of supposing that the elaboration of theology was preaching the gospel. The gospel he was preaching constantly by his pure, unworldly living, by his visitations to homes of poverty and sorrow . . . and by the grand humanity, outrunning his age, with which he

protested against . . . slavery and the slave trade." The mistake was one he shared with Lyman Beecher who, according to Henry Ward, "thought he was great by his theology" although every one else "knew he was great by his religion."

The minister's wooing of Mary Scudder goes for naught, because Mary has previously given her heart to a seaman, James Marvyn, who is reported lost in a shipwreck but eventually comes home bringing the wealth of the Indies to give the tale a happy ending.

In the meantime, both Mary and James's mother suffer cruelly at the hands of the Hopkinsian doctrine that the soul of James, who was not a "professor of religion," is irrevocably damned unless a miracle of regeneration, of which they know nothing, has saved him at the eleventh hour. Mrs. Marvyn, herself unregenerate, is in complete rebellion against such a scheme of things, incapable of worshipping a god who has ordained it, and hopeless of salvation. From the abyss of despair she is rescued by Mary and her colored servant, Candace, both of whom, after the manner of little Eva and Uncle Tom, have assurance that God is Love.

Mary is one of Mrs. Stowe's serene souls, the pattern of perfected resignation, who emerges from the ordeal of her sorrow for James and her anxiety for his soul wearing the look of the Sistine Madonna, whose eyes "have measured infinite sorrow and looked through it to an infinite peace." For, she has envisioned grief as an atonement through which—like Lady Byron—she may save not only her own soul but her lover's also. Having arrived at this

conception she feels resigned to marrying the Hopkinsian doctrine, in the person of the good Dr. Hopkins himself; but is spared this final atonement, and, indeed, released from the earlier one, by the timely arrival of James, hale and hearty, with soul all duly saved, and a fortune in his pockets. He and Mary settle down to live happily ever after in "a fair and stately mansion" overlooking the harbor of Newport, in "that appointed shrine for woman, more holy than cloister, more saintly and pure than church or altar—a *Christian home*."

How the nineteenth century must have applauded the prosperous, domestic conclusion! And how infinitely more satisfactory to have a son or a lover, supposedly drowned, safe in the flesh, than to have him hypothetically safe in the great beyond!

The connection between this story and the experience of Mrs. Stowe is too obvious to need comment. The distressed Mrs. Marvyn has been variously identified by biographers as Catharine Beecher grieving for Professor Fisher, as Professor Fisher's mother, and as Harriet Beecher Stowe grieving for Henry. No doubt all three contributed to the portrait. It is quite likely that when Henry was drowned, Mrs. Stowe remembered the fate of Catharine's lover. Indeed Catharine herself may have recalled it. On their first trip to England, Mrs. Stowe noted Kinsale, where his ship, the *Albion*, had been wrecked. The event had marked a turning point in Beecher theology. But Mrs. Marvyn and Mary Scudder and James all belong among those creatures of the mind through whom a writer's own hopes and fears

and thwarted purposes and ideals are given shape and substance.

Mrs. Marvyn and Mary not only illustrate the problems of Calvinism and the solution, but are also a protest against the emotional and æsthetic poverty of New England. Mrs. Marvyn is a passionate woman whose lot is cast in a typical New England family where love is "understood, once for all . . . and after that, the less said the better." In the "old, staring, rattle-windowed meeting-house" on Sundays, when the choir is "faw-sol-la-ing or singing fuguing tunes," she dreams of the arches, the painted glass, the anthems rolling down the long aisles of the cathedrals she has read about but never seen. She yearns for the glories of the Alps, for the beauties of Mozart and Raphael. The serene Mary, too, has her pathetic side; for in her the "keen New England air" has crystallized emotions into ideas and restricted "the elixir of the spirit . . . of which the souls of poets are made" to expressing itself in practical living.

For both of them James Marvyn is the joy of living. There may be something of Henry Stowe in James. There is certainly much of Augustine St. Clare and Cleon. Here again is the debonair, impetuous, rather wild young worldling whom Mrs. Stowe had loved since youth. God and Mary and a shipwreck transform him into a creature who, if not Sir Charles Grandison when the book closes, promises to become Sir Charles in old age.

But the young worldling has developed a split personality, so to speak, another whose soul can not be so easily saved. ("The name of the just is as brightness, but the

memory of the wicked shall rot.") For the book has a subplot of which the chief characters are Aaron Burr and Virginie, wife of a French diplomat, Colonel de Frontignac. They afford an outlet for the saving grace of the serene soul; for Mary Scudder not only rescues Virginie from the wiles of Burr and sends her back to France with her husband, but she also recalls Burr to his better self. Virginie, in turn, helps to bring about the marriage of Mary and James. Still, the amount of space devoted to Burr and Virginie seems quite out of proportion to their contribution to the minister's wooing.

Virginie is a by-product of Mrs. Stowe's sojourn in Paris and of her contacts with the Roman Church. Her interest in the latter is an early example of a public tendency which was to become increasingly marked as the nineteenth century progressed—a fondness for the comparative study of religions, culminating in the attitude that all religions are the same religion. In the religious discussion which forms so large a part of her book, it was a pleasure and a reassurance to Mrs. Stowe to be able to point out that the Roman Church had a Hell quite as terrific as anything Calvinism could offer; that from Virginie's standpoint Mary's salvation was problematic, despite her standing with the Presbyterians; that if Mary had discovered the love of God through Christ, Virginie knew both Christ and the Virgin; and that the Roman Church had its theory of atonement, also. Virginie's father-confessor tells her that if she will renounce her love for Burr, God may accept her sacrifice as propitiation for his sins and bring him into the True Church at last.

Virginie is reminiscent of an earlier character of Mrs. Stowe's, Nina Gordon of *Dred*. They are another favorite type, beautiful and bewitching and joyous and given over to vanity, until the sorrows of love awaken the nobility that has all the time been merely dozing within. But Virginie has also much of the recalcitrance of the playing spirit. Unlike Mary Scudder, she has not "a born vocation for martyrdom," nor can she easily renounce her love, despite the fact that she recognizes both her own sinfulness and the perfidy of Burr himself, the fact that he is essentially disloyal even to her. "I say, 'My God, I give myself to you!'"—and after all, I don't give myself, and I don't feel comforted . . . I want my dream again, I wish it all back . . . I have lived on this dream so long!"

There is a good deal about shattered dreams in *The Minister's Wooing*. At one point the author turns aside from the story to devote some six pages to the subject. "If ever you have had a romantic . . . a boundless worship and belief in some hero of your soul . . . if you awoke bitterly betrayed and deceived . . . turn not away in skepticism and bitterness . . . but rather cherish the vision and rapture as prophecies and foreshadowings of something real and possible. . . . The scoffing spirit that laughs at romance is an apple of the Devil's own handling from the bitter tree of knowledge."

Of what hero of her soul was Mrs. Stowe thinking? And why does the irrelevant story of Burr and Virginie run away with so large a section of the novel? Why should Burr appear at all? Perhaps to contribute to the discussion of Calvinism; for while Samuel Hopkins was an apostle of

Jonathan Edwards, Burr was Edwards's own grandson and a symbol of one of the ill effects of being nurtured in Calvinistic fatalism. The glimpse of a better religion, as embodied in Mary Scudder, lifts him momentarily from cynicism and might, had he met it earlier, have saved him altogether. He dies with the New Testament under his pillow and the book ends with concern for his soul:

Poor Burr was the petted child of society [writes Virginie], today she flouts and scorns him. . . . Yet sinful as he may be before Infinite Purity, he is not so much more sinful than . . . other men of his time. . . . When every secret fault . . . is held up without mercy, what man can stand? . . . Great have been his sins against our sex, and God forbid that mothers of children should speak lightly of them; but is not so susceptible a temperament, so singular a power to charm . . . to be taken into account in estimating his temptations? . . . He trifled inexcusably with my deepest feelings; he caused me years of conflict and anguish . . . yet . . . what I loved in him was a better self—something really noble and good, however concealed and perverted by pride, ambition, and self-will.

Burr, buried under public odium twenty years earlier, had become romantic by 1859, although it must still have required courage to save his soul. It is difficult to see him in Mrs. Stowe's novel without remembering Lord Byron, nor is it likely that the resemblance escaped Mrs. Stowe herself.

3

The Minister's Wooing gives evidence of having been conceived in excitement and has the value of spontaneous

self-revelation. It is a thoroughly American book, not merely because the scene of it is New England, but by virtue of the emotions from which it sprang, the problems it poses, and the manner of their working out. Even the language is American. If Mrs. Stowe had not always had to write in a hurry, she might have cultivated the copy-book English of the "authoresses," her contemporaries who contributed to *Godey's Lady's Book*. She might even have been led astray by her love of Gothic into the writing of Gothic romance so dear to the middle-class nineteenth century. As it was, she wrote as she thought and talked about things that she knew and topics that concerned her. If her old-fashioned way of thinking and what Mrs. Browning called her "wretched writing"—verbose, colloquial—remove her work from literature considered as a fine art, her naturalness gives it a place in literature considered as an expression of the life of the people.

Mrs. Stowe, always pressed for time, could never give more than a fleeting thought to art. There were other reasons for writing books. The need of money; for despite the large royalties that poured in, she never got beyond it. A personal distress to unload. The burden of fame; for she was continually prodded, not only by publishers looking for best sellers, but also by her sense of duty to a public that plainly expected her to champion causes and teach morals. Such a duty was not uncongenial. Writing books was her substitute for the pulpit oratory of her father and brothers. Indeed, unless literature served some such clearly perceived end, what place had it in an industrious, democratic, God-fearing society?

The utilitarian motive accounted in part at least for the homeliness of the language. It resulted also in the prosy, pedestrian, realistic tone and temper of her work—so middle-class, so American. But with the homeliness and the realism, there is a perpetual undercurrent of the other side of the American temper, the suppressed emotionalism, the romantic yearnings, the perennial optimism of the playing spirit.

In the decade following the publication of *The Minister's Wooing*, Mrs. Stowe wrote two more of her four best books, *The Pearl of Orr's Island* (1862) and *Old Town Folks* (1869). New England is the scene of both. The former is the Maine story begun the year that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was finished. The latter takes place in Old Natick, now South Natick, Massachusetts, the birthplace of Professor Stowe, who is credited with supplying many of the characters and incidents. Both books continue the religious theme, and both present again the people who were the constant companions of Mrs. Stowe's mind and heart.

The serene soul of Orr's Island is Mara, who, like little Eva, passes away in a quick consumption. She dies on the eve of her marriage to Moses, another of Mrs. Stowe's favorite wild young men, but not before she has set his feet upon the path of righteousness. It is notable, however, that Mrs. Stowe had decided that the earthy worldling, even when reformed, was not, after all, a suitable mate for one of her saints.

By the time she came to write *Old Town Folks*, she had, at least temporarily, given up saving the soul of the worldling altogether. Ellery Davenport who, like Aaron Burr,

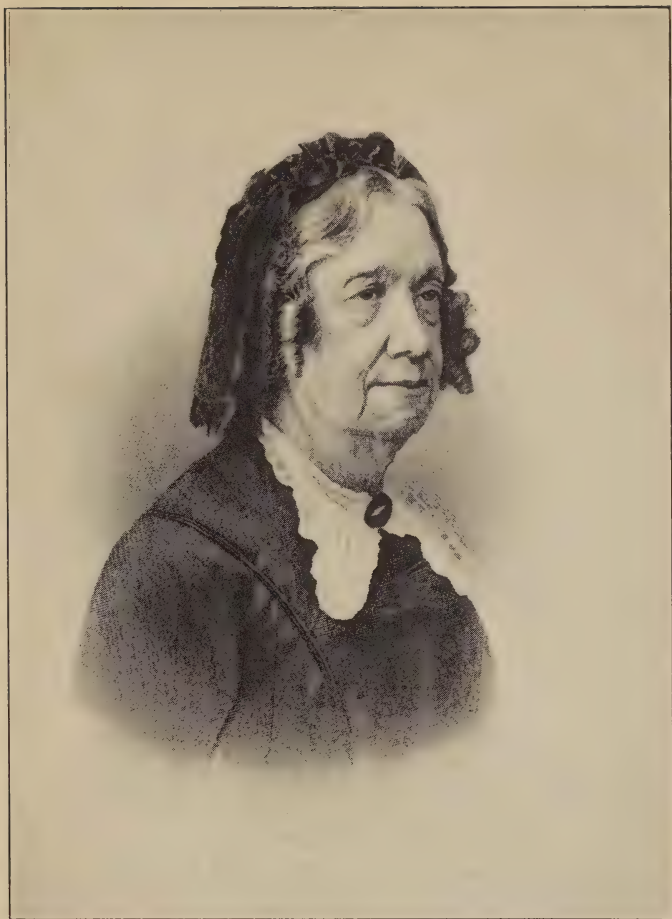
is a grandson of Jonathan Edwards and nurtured in Calvinism, has, like Lord Byron, all the bitterness of the disinherited son, the uncertainties and struggles of a man never able entirely to rid himself of a belief in what he hates. With faith disintegrated and conscience shamed, he goes the way of dissipation, intrigue and madness and ends his days in a duel. His career serves chiefly to evoke the nobility of his wife, Tina, the Nina and Virginie of *Old Town Folks*.

There were many young people, according to Mrs. Stowe, who, as a result of the Edwards doctrines, grew up like Ellery Davenport, hating religion, or who, if they did not hate it, suffered under it as did Esther Avery. Esther is a youthful edition of Mrs. Marvyn, a victim to morbid ideality, whose exacting self-analysis made it impossible for her to feel elected to salvation. In her, no doubt, Mrs. Stowe was remembering the religious perplexities of her own youth and of Catharine Beecher and the young women of the Hartford Female Seminary. Esther's problem is solved—let latter-day psychologists take note—by love and marriage to the serene soul of Old Town, Harry Percival, who becomes a clergyman of the Church of England.

Mrs. Stowe was absorbed in the fate of all of these longtime companions of her mind; but she was also absorbed in the fate of her religion. *The Pearl of Orr's Island* is full of nostalgia for the primitive Puritan community and the primitive faith. "The state of society in some of the districts of Maine . . . resembled in its spirit that which Moses labored to produce . . . democratic, simple . . . solemn

and religious . . . yet full of wholesome thrift and prosperity. . . . Even the Puritan Sabbath was not merely a burdensome restraint. It brought with it all the sweetness that belongs to rest, all the sacredness that hallows home, all the memories of sober order, of chastened yet intense family feeling, of calmness and dignity which distinguish the Puritan household." Nor was Puritanism out of harmony with the Love of God. "Christ speaks of himself as *bread* to be eaten—bread, simple, humble, necessary, made by the bruising and grinding of the grain, having no life or worth of its own except as it is absorbed into the life of others. We wished in this history to speak of a class of lives formed on the model of Christ, obscure and unpretending, seeming to end in darkness and defeat, made not for a history of their own, but to be the bread of life to others."

But such lives and such a religion could only be lived in small, homogeneous, simple communities. The welter of life in swiftly expanding, swiftly changing nineteenth-century America could not be made to fit the ancient, primitive pattern. In *Old Town Folks* Mrs. Stowe is preoccupied with the decline and fall of the New England theocracy, which she traces with wisdom born of long brooding and with surprising detachment for one so nearly concerned in it. The enthusiasm of the Puritan Fathers had cooled off by the third generation and crystallized into formalism. Moreover, Old Calvinism, with its emphasis upon unity and authority, had felt the disintegrating influence, not only of the dissenting sects, but also of the growth of democracy and individualism. The revival activities of Jonathan Edwards and his apostles, stressing the



Catherine E. Beecher

From a photograph made in 1875.

ancient dogmas and, at the same time, catering to individualism by preaching free agency and personal responsibility for salvation and leading the individual to think for himself, had brought on the final overthrow of the theocracy. The Edwards doctrines might be a source of agony to the exceptional Mrs. Marvyn and Esther Avery, or anathema to the Ellery Davenports, but they were merely a joke to the village jack-of-all-trades, Sam Lawson. Said Sam:

Parson Simpson said our state and condition by natur' was like this. We was clear down a well fifty feet deep, and the sides all round nothin' but glare ice: but we was under immediate obligations to get out, 'cause we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever had got out, and nobody would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em. And whether He would or not, nobody could tell; it was all sovereignty. . . . There wa'n't one in a hundred—not one in a thousand—not one in ten thousand—that would be saved. Lordy massy, says I to myself, ef that's so they're any of 'em welcome to my chance. And so I kind o' ris up and come out, 'cause I'd got a pretty long walk home, and I wanted to go round by South Pond, and inquire about Aunt Sally Morse's toothache.

The minister, whose cocked hat and clerical wig and gold-headed cane had once been the village symbols of nobility and authority, had become a plain citizen whose words came without prestige and were examined and sifted like the words of any other citizen. Like most good church-going people, Mrs. Stowe believed that a race of ministers would arise who could maintain the authority of religion despite their own loss of position. But in the meantime, as one brooded upon one's own sorrows and the

wretchedness of the sinning world, one craved the reassurance of authority. Not to believe the harsh tenets of Calvinism! Nature herself was authority enough for the belief that men, "are predestined to be conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity . . . neglected, suffering children, bred like fish-spawn on a thousand shores, by a Being who has never interested himself to prevent their degradation, to interfere with their cruelties to each other, as they have writhed and wrangled into life, through life and out of life again." What one must have was authority for faith in the Atonement, for the Gospel "that every human soul . . . has One Friend . . . Jesus Christ its Lord and Saviour."

The early Puritans had clung to the authority of the ancient Church, being "in all but political opinion warmly attached to the Church of England" and in their wisdom had taught their children that they were in covenant with God with the seal of baptism upon them. But Protestantism, through its increasing emphasis upon the freedom and the responsibility of the individual, had left him isolated, vulnerable, unsupported, adrift. The logical solution was return to authority. It was a solution of which the Oxford Movement was only one nineteenth-century example. Several years before her Esther Avery saved her soul by marrying an Episcopal clergyman, Mrs. Stowe herself had taken to heart the early precepts of Aunt Harriet Foote and gone into the Episcopal Church.

The drift toward the Episcopacy noticeable in nineteenth-century America was, of course, also a phase of the Romanticist's yearning for elegance and permanence and tradition and mystery, an aspect of the Gothic mania, to

which Mrs. Stowe was not unsympathetic. Indeed *The Minister's Wooing*, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, and *Old Town Folks*, all three, have something of the romantic haze upon them, which manifests itself most spectacularly in a fondness for haunted houses, prophetic dreams, and mystery shrouding the parentage of several of the chief characters. But the phase of romanticism that took hold of Mrs. Stowe most firmly was its concern for the humble man, out of which realism was to develop.

It was as a realist, our first realist, in fact, that Mrs. Stowe made a definite contribution to American letters. After religion and mystery and melodrama and the protagonists who embody her own emotions—all interesting enough as reflections of the taste and thought of her own generation—have been eliminated from her work, there remain pictures of New England life of a simple honesty and penetration scarcely improved upon by any of the dozens of New England realists who have come after her. Her studies of New England character are the more noteworthy because she had no literary models for that sort of writing. No doubt her share of Lyman Beecher's naturalness and shrewdness and sociability stood her in good stead. Whittier called *The Pearl of Orr's Island* "the most charming New England idyl ever written." But Sarah Orne Jewett's comment is more significant. "I have been reading the beginning of *The Pearl of Orr's Island*," she wrote a few days after Mrs. Stowe's funeral, in July, 1896, "and finding it just as clear and perfectly original and strong as it seemed to me in my thirteenth year. . . . It is classical—historical." From Mrs. Stowe, Sarah Orne Jewett learned her own

proper material and the manner of handling it, a lesson which enabled her, in turn, to point the way for Willa Cather to find significance in Nebraska.

The beginning of *The Pearl of Orr's Island* which Sarah Orne Jewett found original and historical, describes a shipwreck and, as an aftermath, the body of a seaman as it lay in a farm-house:

A solitary ray of light comes from the chink of a half-opened door. Here is . . . the "best room," with low studded walls, white dimity curtains, rag carpet, and polished wood chairs . . . now lit by . . . a solitary tallow candle, which makes only a feeble circle of light around itself, leaving the rest in shadow.

In the centre of the room, stretched upon a table, and partly covered with a sea-cloak, lies the body of a man . . . in a full suit of broadcloth, with a white vest and smart blue neck-tie, fastened with a pin, ornamented with braided hair under a crystal. All his clothing, as well as his hair, is saturated with sea-water, which trickles with a leaden sound into a sullen pool under the table.

This is the body of James Lincoln, ship-master of the brig, *Flying Scud*, who that morning dressed himself gayly in his state-room to go on shore and meet his wife.

In the room above his wife is dying in childbirth:

"She'll make a beautiful corpse," said Aunt Roxy. . . .

"She was a pretty girl," said Aunt Ruey, "Dear me, what a Providence!"

"They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided," said Aunt Roxy sententiously. . . . "A pity the poor baby didn't go with her! Seven-months' children are so hard to raise."

Mrs. Stowe's New England is not a thing of lavender-scented and pious memories, nor yet quaint and amusing merely. Frost is upon it, and the moan of the sea in the air. If the mayflower hides among the rocks, the rocks are bleak and flinty. The chestnut burrs may be velvety within, but are none the less stinging to the touch. There is much wit and shrewdness in Mrs. Stowe's realism, and objectivity and tolerance and acceptance of life unusual in an evangelical American, but also that undercurrent of protest against the ineluctable burden of living that seems of the essence of all realism.

All of the village types that have since become familiar to us through the work of Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and others are there—the people Mrs. Stowe had watched as a child from her corner in the kitchen of the Litchfield parsonage or encountered later in Brunswick and its neighboring communities. But she has done something better than leave us sketches of Yankee individualists. She has indicated the forces of nature and society that shaped them and the interplay of climate and natural surroundings and thought on each other. The natural affinity between Calvinism and the New England climate gave birth inevitably to crusty eccentrics who “never expected to find truth agreeable. Nothing in their experience of life had ever prepared them to think it would be.” The struggle of many of them merely to keep warm had made them hug such natural warmth as they had within to let no spark escape; so that a class of people had arisen who hurried all softer feelings, all unwonted gusts of the

heart into the inner chambers and slammed the doors upon them, as if vexed at their appearance. The hardness of life had developed many such uncompromising realists as Mrs. Kittredge who not only saw her whimsical husband's sea-faring yarns as symptoms of moral depravity, but who made her children, as the opportunity arose, lay their hands upon corpses. "Children's got to learn to take the world as it is. . . . Teach 'em to begin as they've got to go out—that's my maxim."

The hardness of life and the earnestness of religion had also called forth the talent for practical achievement that had blasted farms out of rocks and founded thriving cities in waste places. It had, moreover, encouraged the shrewd and vigorous man to push ahead of his neighbors and grab all he could for himself, as had Simeon Brown, ship-owner and slave trader of Newport; but it had also fostered the kind of pride in industry and self-reliance exhibited by Mrs. Katy Scudder, which made her impregnable to condescension from Mrs. Brown. It had, indeed, sharpened natural inequalities in individuals, breaking down traditional social barriers inherited from the Old World and setting up new ones in their place:

New England has been called the land of equality; but what land is wholly so? . . . He who has ten pounds will always be a nobleman to him who has but one, let him strive as manfully as he may; and therefore let us forgive meek little Mrs. Twitchel for melting into nothing in her own eyes when Mrs. Brown came in, and let us forgive Mrs. Brown that she sat down in the rocking-chair with an easy grandeur, as one who thought it her duty to be affable and meant to be. It was, however, rather difficult for Mrs. Brown, with her money,

house, Negroes, and all, to patronize Mrs. Katy Scudder, a woman of "faculty." It was one of Mrs. Brown's trials of life, the secret quality in her neighbor who stood so far below her in worldly goods. Even the quiet, positive style of Mrs. Katy's knitting made her nervous; it was an implication of independence of her sway. . . . She mentally contrasted the neat little parlor with its white, sanded floor and muslin curtains, with her own grand front room, which boasted the then uncommon luxuries of Turkey carpet and Persian rug, and wondered if Mrs. Katy did really feel as cool and easy in receiving her as she appeared.

You must not understand that this was what Mrs. Brown supposed herself to be thinking; by no means! All the little mean work of our nature is generally done in a small dark closet just a little back of the subject we are talking about, on which we suppose ourselves to be thinking—of course we are thinking of it, how else could we talk about it?

Mrs. Brown is an illustration of the snobbish uneasiness of a person who has risen from the ranks of the common people in a democratic community. But the footing of people of inherited gentility was no less insecure in difficult New England. Mrs. Stowe was already depicting the decay of the genteel tradition when that tradition was at its height, the shining ultimate in achievement for all middle-class Americans. She made early note of the inability of the gentleman-and-scholar to take care of himself in pioneer communities without the props of inherited means and position. "There is a class of men who go through life under a cloud for no other reason than that, being born with the nature of gentlemen, they are nevertheless poor," she says of the schoolmaster in *Old Town Folks*. "Such men live under a sense of rebuke from our good mother

world; and yet it is easy to see that even a moderate competence would turn their faults into virtues." But—more interestingly—she discusses another type of decay, the kind resulting from the isolation of people who belonged to the two or three families who wore ruffles at their wrists, rode in their own coaches, and never worked with their hands, in communities where all of the real authority was exercised by farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers.

Such a family were the Rossiters of Old Town:

Almost every old settler in New England can remember stately old houses inhabited by old families whose histories might be brought to mind by Miss Mehitable and her brother. . . . The characteristic of such families is the greatly disproportioned force of the internal, intellectual, and, spiritual life to the external one. . . . The threads which connect such persons with the life of the outer world are so fine and so weak; that they are constantly breaking and giving way here and there. . . . Oddities and eccentricities come to be accepted as badges of family character. From such stock come some of the most brilliant and effective minds in New England; and from them also come recluses.

One of the latter is Miss Mehitable Rossiter who has gone into seclusion out of shame and distress over her sister's elopement. Her brother Jonathan has also withdrawn from the world, if in different fashion, taking himself off to an isolated Berkshire village, where, in the intervals of leisurely teaching, he ponders the intricacies of Calvinism and collects specimens of herbs and rocks and beetles. They are the last of their race.

A similiar pair, the minister, Mr. Sewell, and his sister

Emily, appear in *The Pearl of Orr's Island*—people out of a gentler society than any to be found in the Maine fishing village. Mr. Sewell has retreated behind the whimsical, ironical detachment of a spectator of life and warms himself with reveries over the lost romance of his youth, when he had all but run away with the daughter of a West Indian planter—not run away, of course, because such a step called for more red blood and brawn than nature had given him. His sister finds that a nose for gossip is a great help in adapting herself to village society. While keeping the manners of the genteel, she prys into her brother's secrets and supplies the sympathetic women of his congregation with intimate details about his clothing and personal habits.

All of this is now an old story in American fiction. It was not old when Mrs. Stowe wrote it.

4

When *The Minister's Wooing* was finished, in the summer of 1859, Mrs. Stowe, accompanied by the Professor and sixteen-year-old Georgie, sailed once more for Europe. In London they paused briefly to call upon the Duchess of Sutherland and Lady Byron. The Duchess swept down her magnificent staircase in a white morning gown and gathered the little Yankee woman in her voluminous bosom, "like a small gray kitten in a snow bank," to quote Professor Stowe.

The first visit to Lady Byron was the occasion of the "frozen fit" already described. But the second was a long

summer afternoon which the two spent walking and talking in the garden. At the end as they were driving to the station in Lady Byron's carriage, Mrs. Stowe discovered that she had forgotten her gloves. "With one of those impulsive motions, so natural to Lady Byron in doing a kindness, she drew off her own, and said, 'Take mine if they will serve.' " What a memento! What a symbol! What a farewell! It was their last meeting. Before Mrs. Stowe's European vacation was over, Lady Byron was dead.

From London the Stowes went to Paris to meet the twins who were still in the Protestant school where their mother had left them nearly three years earlier. Thence all five journeyed to Switzerland, exploring the country from Chamonix to Basle. With them went John Ruskin with whom Mrs. Stowe had already corresponded, intimately enough at least to have written him a letter about the death of Henry Stowe which he considered worth showing to a friend who had also lost a son. Ruskin describes the Swiss journey: "I traveled with Mrs. Beecher Stowe and her family . . . losing a great corner of my heart to her little daughter Georgie in a scramble about the Glacier des Boissons; and discussing immovable articles of faith in a serene picnic by the castle of Valangrin above Neufchâtel; and while we rested under the as immovable Pierre à Bot, with the great ramparts of Swiss liberty glittering to their outmost bastions beyond the blue lake at our feet."

From Switzerland Mr. Stowe and Georgie returned to America while the rest of the party went on to spend the winter in Italy. They did sight-seeing in Milan, Verona, Venice, Genoa, and Leghorn, and late in the autumn,

reached Florence where they were joined by Frederick Stowe and a friend who had come from America in a sailing vessel. In Florence they took an apartment and settled down to stay until February. From there they went to Rome for the spring, with short trips to Naples and the neighboring Castellammare, Sorrento, Salerno, Paestum, Amalfi, and Capri.

In Italy, Mrs. Stowe found a happy place for herself in Anglo-American society, despite what Colonel Higginson described as the "mixture of *mauvaise honte* and indifference" which often marred her outward manner. For formal society she had neither the taste nor the discipline. She was shy and absent-minded and behaved as she felt, seeming artlessly unaware of any obligation to affect interest and pleasure that she did not feel. At a dinner in her honor she might lapse into impenetrable silence. At a reception she might wander off by herself to read a book that had caught her eye on the host's shelves. At one function given for her, in her old age, her daughter-in-law discovered that she had gone to bed. She was tired, she protested, and what possible difference could it make to all of those people whether she was there or not? And yet she was a sociable person who delighted to gather friends about her fireside, where with her feet propped against the fender she would talk as the spirit moved her, discussing art or philosophy or religion, or merely spinning yarns from an inexhaustible store.

Italy was full of people whom she enjoyed and loved. Her constant companions were Henry Ward's parishioners, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Howard and their children, John

and Annie, of Brooklyn. Through them she met Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields who also joined them in their excursions. Mr. Fields became Mrs. Stowe's publisher when the firm, Ticknor and Fields, succeeded Phillips, Sampson and Company. "Mrs. Fields with the beautiful face and charming manners"—to quote George Eliot—was an appreciative and sympathetic friend who understood and condoned Mrs. Stowe's social eccentricities and enriched her life. The Fields' home in Boston grew to be a haven for New England's most distinguished writers. There Mrs. Stowe, a frequent guest, became intimate with Holmes and Lowell and Whittier and Hawthorne and Sarah Orne Jewett. Mrs. Fields was also intermediary in the friendship, pursued entirely by correspondence, between the Stowes and George Eliot. When Mrs. Stowe died, it was Mrs. Fields who edited her letters.

John Raymond Howard, in his reminiscences, *Remembrance of Things Past*, has written with enthusiasm of the Howards and Fields and Stowes in Italy; of Mrs. Stowe's quick wit and angelic temper; of the twins, Hattie and Eliza, who were animated and attractive, and Frederick Stowe, alert and intelligent, but not very well; of Mrs. Stowe's informal Wednesday evenings at home, frequented by Ruskin's friend, the saintly Francesca Alexander, the Trollopes, Charlotte Cushman, Harriet Hosmer, Theodore Parker, Robert Browning, and many others; of evenings by the fire when Mrs. Stowe told them the early chapters of her new novel, *Agnes of Sorrento*.

He remembers her as the gayest of the group, but her letters indicate how much of the gaiety was on the surface.

Her grief for Henry was only partly assuaged and her confidence in his future not as unwavering as she could have wished. It was difficult to look at Mrs. Howard with her children, all well and all around her, without a pang. Every day she repeated to herself the Plymouth Hymn:

I worship thee, sweet will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live, I long
To love thee more and more.

Such incantations lulled one into the illusion of being resigned; but still one's hands pressed impotently against the impregnable wall.

At home in Andover, Professor Stowe, whose phantom visitors had multiplied and become more real with age, was sure that he heard Henry's spirit pluck the strings of a guitar. But Mrs. Stowe reminded him that it was Eliza Tyler who had always made her presence known to him in that way. In the meantime, in the apartment under hers in Florence, she had discovered a Mrs. E—— of Boston, whose experience with phantoms was much like the Professor's. Mrs. E—— might have been a powerful medium but for the fact that as a devout Christian she was nervous about spiritualistic manifestations. With the inquisitiveness of a good American and a Beecher, Mrs. Stowe advised her to shield herself with Scripture reading and prayer and then let the spirits tell her all they would. Six years earlier, Mrs. Stowe had classified the European fad for "spiritual rappings and table turnings" with "the floating et ceteras of life." Now she made frequent visits to Mrs. E—— of eve-

nings, because Henry's presence seemed hovering there. One Sunday, an invisible hand smote all of the strings of a little Florentine guitar hanging in Mrs. E——'s parlor—the more remarkable, because Mrs. E—— had asked the spirits, if any were present while Mrs. Stowe was there, to manifest themselves in that way; and also because Mrs. E——'s sister, a matter-of-fact person, heard the sound, too, over the clatter of preparations for supper.

Thanks to the Professor's peculiar experience, the Stowes must have been interested in psychic phenomena for years, although contemporary religious opinion condemned such interest as contrary to the spirit of Christianity. As old age crept upon them and losses multiplied and hopes faded, the interest deepened.

In one of her more mature moments, Mrs. Stowe wrote out for her children what she believed one ought to think about spiritualism:

Each friend takes away a portion of ourselves . . . and again and again, with involuntary yearning, we turn to the stone at the door of the sepulchre. We lean against the cold, silent marble, but there is no answer. . . . There are those who would have us think that in *our* day this doom is reversed. . . . Ah, *were* it true! . . . But for us the stone must be rolled away by an *unquestionable* angel. . . . No such angel have we seen. . . . And when we look at what is offered to us, ah! who that has friends in heaven could wish them to return in such wise? . . . to juggle and rap and squeak and perform mountebank tricks with tables and chairs. . . . We have read with some attention weary pages of spiritual communication purporting to come from Bacon, Swedenborg, and others. . . . If the future life is as weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable as we

might infer from these readings, one would have reason to deplore an immortality from which no suicide could give an outlet. . . . Is there, then, no satisfaction for this craving of the soul? There is one who says: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore!". . . He is the true bond of union between the spirit world and our souls; and one blest hour of prayer, when we draw near to Him and feel the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love of his that passeth knowledge, is better than all those incoherent, vain, dreamy glimpses with which longing hearts are cheated.

None the less, in 1868, she offers the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* an article on planchette. A lady of her acquaintance has had remarkable communications of which Mrs. Stowe has kept a record and could prepare a very curious article. In 1876, she writes Oliver Wendell Holmes that she would like to talk with him about revelations she has collected from mediums not professional. At the same time, Professor Stowe was knee-deep in *Die Christliche Mystick* by Joseph Görres, dealing with the whole cycle of abnormal psychic facts, trances, clairvoyance, witchcraft, and so on, as shown in Romish miracles and European history. In her correspondence with George Eliot, extending from 1869 to 1876, there are frequent references to spiritualism. George Eliot wished to be open minded upon this as upon other subjects, but considered most of it "degrading folly." No doubt Mrs. Stowe's experience with planchette was amazing, but still one could not believe that the words dictated came from Charlotte Brontë.

A more sympathetic friend was Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Mrs. Stowe spent much time with the Brownings in Rome in the spring of 1860. On closer acquaintance,

Mrs. Browning had discovered in Mrs. Stowe amazing largeness and fearlessness of thought for a Puritan. Together they discussed all of their spiritual problems. Mrs. Stowe's theology, the Brownings thought, was much like that of Swedenborg in whom they were interested. As for spiritualism, Mrs. Browning, suffering with remorse over the death of the father from whom she had fled in bitterness, felt the need of it as deeply as did Mrs. Stowe. It was encouraging to learn that Mrs. Stowe had had five communications from Henry's spirit, through as many mediums, varying in respectability from high Calvinist to low infidel, but all verifying their communications with references to private papers, and other matters secret between Henry and his mother. Professional mediums and all spiritual jugglery might be of the Devil; none the less there was a "real scriptural spiritualism" which needed to be revived to counteract the materialism of the age. Moreover, the marvels of spiritualism were probably but the uncommon working of natural laws. The door between those in the body and those out had never been entirely closed. Mrs. Stowe's interest in spiritualism, so Mrs. Browning assured her friend Miss Haworth, did not indicate that she had turned infidel. "Her last words to me when we parted were, 'Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ never see one another for the last time.'"

At the Brownings' Mrs. Stowe also encountered Charles Henry Manning, newly ordained priest of the Roman Church, who practiced his powers of conversion upon her. He might have succeeded if one side of her mind had not rejected what the other side accepted. Ritual, symbolism,

and tradition all took hold of her. In any case the influence of Manning is apparent in *Agnes of Sorrento*, the novel that grew out of her Italian holiday.

The book was begun as a fireside tale invented to pass the time, one day when the Stowes and Howards and Fields were weather-bound at Salerno. It developed into a study of religion in the days of Savonarola. The characters Mrs. Stowe believed she had seen in Italian streets; but her readers had encountered them elsewhere. Agnes is an Italian Mary Scudder and little Eva, who serves the pious Brother Antonio as a model for a painting of the Blessed Virgin. She has two lovers: an Italian James Marvyn, lost to society, for a season, and his soul imperiled, not by shipwreck, but by the rapacity of the Borgias; and an Italian Aaron Burr, turned monk and fanatic to atone for a licentious past, but still distressed by the smoldering fires of passion. Agnes has, also, a grandmother blessed with the thrift and "faculty" of Mrs. Scudder, who is anxious to find her granddaughter a good, safe husband. The tale ends well, of course; but as in all of Mrs. Stowe's work, when sentimentality and melodrama have been swept away, there remains a reading of life which keeps the book out of the trash basket.

In this case, we have her thoughts on Romanism. Like other religions, it takes its quality from the people who practice it. For Savonarola it was a trumpet call to repentance and social reform. To the passionate it is an outlet for passion; to the sadistic, an instrument of torture; to the acquisitive, a means of acquiring; to the superstitious, at once a source of fear and an amulet. Through the serene

and loving it manifests the love of Christ. So also of its peculiar institutions and tenets. The monastery was a place of peace for the spiritual-minded, a nursery for the arts, and a refuge for defenseless women in a lawless age, but also, a hide-out for the Seven Deadly Sins. The confessional in the hands of Fenelon might strengthen the weak and guide the foolish. Others might use it to satisfy curiosity or appease the lust for power. Hell, invented by the early Christians to get even in the next world with those who had tortured them in this, was alien to the thoughts of Agnes, whose mind dwelt upon the legends of saints and angels and the glories of paradise.

We can see in the hymns of Savonarola how perfect might be the love and veneration for departed saints without lapsing into idolatry, and with what an atmosphere of warmth and glory the belief in the unity of the Church visible and invisible, could inspire an elevated soul. . . . To believe in an infinite struggle of intercession which bound all to an interceding Redeemer, so that there was no want or woe of human life that had not somewhere its never-ceasing prayer before the throne of Eternal Love, was far more consoling than that intense individualism of modern philosophy which places every soul alone in its life-battle—scarce even giving it a God to lean upon.

In May of 1860, Mrs. Stowe was suddenly homesick for Andover and eager to resume her burdens. She and the Professor and their four remaining children would settle down once more and make a happy home. With the Fields and the Hawthornes, she and the twins and Frederick set sail for America.

5

At home the war clouds were rolling in. The previous autumn, John Brown had raided Harper's Ferry. In November after Mrs. Stowe's return, a little-known, gawky lawyer from the Middle West was elected President. In consequence, South Carolina withdrew from the Union, to be followed within two months by Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. "Let the erring sisters go in peace," said Horace Greeley, Wendell Phillips, and Garrison.

They break the links of Union; shall we light
The flames of hell to weld anew the chain
On that red anvil where each blow is pain?

wrote Whittier.

The Beechers did not agree. Such a policy might prevent the spread of slavery in the North; but it would never put an end to it in the South. For the *Independent*, Henry Ward's paper, to which she had been contributing articles on "The Higher Christian Life," poems, and minor sketches, including one of the Prince of Wales who had just visited us, Mrs. Stowe wrote "The Church and the Slave Trade," "What God Hath Wrought," and "The President's Message," in support of Lincoln.

On April 13, 1861, Fort Sumter was fired upon. Four days later the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment entrained for Washington. In Baltimore they were attacked by a mob. Not until the New York Seventh caught up with them on

April 25th, were they able to go on. In the meantime, rail and telegraph communications to Washington having been cut and the city isolated for a week, Lincoln paced the floor of the White House, while the Navy Yard was burned and ships at anchor sunk to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Virginians who had seceded.

When communications with the North were once more established, young men flocked to the colors, as fast as news of the President's plight reached them. Among the first to enlist was poor Frederick Stowe, just turned twenty-one. What else was left to a son of the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? His Beecher cousins and his Uncle James Beecher joined him. After that, a great deal of his mother's life must have been absorbed in concern for him, writing letters, waiting for news, snatching opportunities for brief visits.

There were not as many war-time activities for women in 1861 as in 1917. A few nursed the wounded. Many more were like Georgie Stowe who wrote Ruskin that she was "working her fingers to the bone embroidering banners." To sit at home and sew and knit and pray for the soldiers or take care of soldiers' families left in want—little else remained. And in the meantime, of course, one's usual duties persisted. Mrs. Stowe, for instance, was under contract for two books. *Agnes of Sorrento* ran in both the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Cornhill Magazine*, from May, 1861 to May, 1862, and *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, in the *Independent*, intermittently from April, 1861 to April, 1862. In the fall of 1862, however, she became aware of a special duty which she owed to the cause of the Union.

The latter was making but feeble progress. Opinion in the North was by no means united on the war. Northern capitalists with southern investments and New England mill owners deprived of cotton by Lincoln's blockade of southern ports agreed with the friends of Garrison that it would be wiser to let the South go in peace. The Garrison party, also, had been further antagonized by Lincoln's slavery policy. If the war was being fought to free the slaves, why had Lincoln countermanded Frémont's order confiscating the slaves of all those in arms against the Government, and General Hunter's order freeing the slaves of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida? Why did he object to General Butler's harboring slaves who escaped to his camp on the Virginia coast? His offer to free the slaves of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri by purchase, did not help matters, because those states would not accept it. Other anti-slavery factions, including the Beechers, were similarly critical. In the meantime, McClellan, snubbing the President, was waging inglorious warfare in Virginia, and enlistments in the Union Army had fallen off to the point where conscription was imminent. In the meantime, also, the attitude of Great Britain was a cause of persistent alarm to the supporters of the Union. Forgetting her earlier enthusiasm for freeing the slave, she was concerned only about the injury to her commerce inflicted by the blockade of southern ports, and was threatening to make that blockade ineffective by recognizing the Confederacy.

To Mrs. Stowe, remembering all of the speeches she had listened to in England and Scotland, in 1853, the British attitude was a particularly sore point. In her parlor at

Andover stood an oak cabinet with twenty-six folio volumes bound in blue morocco, containing 562,448 signatures to Lord Shaftesbury's *Affectionate and Christian Address from the Women of Great Britain to the Women of America*. The address had never been answered. Now seemed the appropriate time, and, moreover, at this point, events conspired to egg her on. Lincoln suddenly brought slavery forward as the main issue of the war. The nominal Union victory at Antietam having given him the excuse for which he had been waiting to assume a more commanding attitude toward the South, on September 23, 1862, he issued a proclamation declaring that the slaves of all states in arms against the Government should be free, unless those states returned to the Union within three months. Here was a reply to the *Affectionate and Christian Address* which should leave no doubt in the minds of the British people as to which side was the side of righteousness.

But before Mrs. Stowe printed her reply to the British women, which she intended should be as forceful as possible, she wanted to feel sure of her ground. Just how much did Lincoln mean by what he said? On Thanksgiving day there was to be a public dinner in Washington for a thousand fugitive slaves, to which Mrs. Stowe was invited. She accepted the more readily because it would give her a chance of seeing Frederick, now lieutenant, and James Beecher, who were encamped near by, and also, of calling upon the heads of departments and Lincoln himself to make sure that the Emancipation Proclamation was "a reality and a substance, not a fizzle out at the little end of the horn."

The dinner for the fugitives made a deep impression upon her. They, at least, took the Proclamation seriously and sang with fervor at once barbaric and religious:

“Oh, go down Moses,
Way down into Egypt’s land!
Tell King Pharo
To let my people go!”

Of her visit to Lincoln she left no record, so that we are dependent upon family legend for an account of it. Twelve-year-old Charley and Henry Wilson, Representative from Massachusetts and Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs, went with her. Charley remembered that the President was sitting with his feet upon the mantelpiece, when they came in; that he liked an open fire as much as the Stowes did; that he said “to home” instead of “at home”; and that he said to Mrs. Stowe, “So this is the little woman who wrote the book that made this big war.”

Mrs. Stowe had doubtless heard as much before, and, at the time, could not have been too happy over the responsibility thus attributed to her. Nor is it likely that she was particularly impressed by Lincoln. Every one found fault with him in those days, and a great many shared the opinion of his Secretary of State that he was a “Simple Susan.” The Beechers had the distinction of being more loyal to him than most people. Henry Ward had campaigned for him when he was by no means as well nor as favorably known as either Henry Ward or Mrs. Stowe herself. Besides, she had already met a great many famous people,

people who by virtue of her own tastes and interests, must have impressed her more than a gawky, Middle-Western lawyer and politician, albeit the President of the United States, could have done. Nevertheless, he evidently convinced her of his sincerity in regard to the emancipation of the slaves; for that night, in her room at a Washington hotel, she completed her *Reply to the Affectionate and Christian Address* and mailed it to the *Atlantic Monthly*.

In it she reminded the British women of their former zeal for the slave, pointed out to them what had already been accomplished in America in his behalf, with emphasis upon the Emancipation Proclamation, and rebuked the English people for their support of the South.

It was a suitable and timely gesture. How much effect it had in Great Britain we do not know. George Eliot was glad to see that the *Reply* was "free from all tartness or conceit." John Bright wrote Mrs. Stowe that its effect had been marked and beneficial, causing many to think, covering some with shame, and stimulating a few to act; that large and earnest meetings were being held in England in favor of abolition and the North. Archbishop Whately of Dublin, on the other hand, sent a different report. The majority of the British did not sympathize with either North or South, but regretted the expenditure of life and property to no purpose. The anti-northern faction claimed that the war was not about slavery but about union. The South had as much right to secede as the United States had to revolt from England, and if she continued to hold her own, should be recognized by foreign powers. Moreover,

the embargo on cotton had caused great suffering in England. As for slavery, the Archbishop himself believed in gradual emancipation, something which might have been accomplished by allowing the South to separate from the Union and then freeing such of her slaves as escaped into northern territory. The British people were getting tired of northern railings against them and of northern threats to invade Canada. Probably there was some truth in Hawthorne's opinion that John Bull "cared nothing for or against slavery, except as it gave him a vantage ground on which to parade his own virtue and sneer at our iniquity."

Apparently the *Reply* did little to make the way easy for Henry Ward on his famous speaking tour of the English and Scotch industrial cities, the following year. What, however, must have given his audiences the background for understanding his appeal, once he had compelled them to listen, was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Some of the Beecher contemporaries, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, Robert E. Lee, and Lincoln himself, rated Henry Ward's British speeches and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* among the potent forces that prevented Great Britain and France, as well, from recognizing the Confederacy. In any case, the fact that the public gave Mrs. Stowe credit for a share in national events, was evidenced by a spontaneous ovation accorded her at a concert in Boston, when the final Emancipation Proclamation was issued, in January, 1863. That she had had a share in liberating the slaves must have been happier to reflect upon than that she had caused a war.

6

In the fall of 1862, also, Mrs. Stowe had another, a more strictly personal interest. In characteristic American fashion, she was about to move again in search of a permanent home. The Professor would retire, the following spring. He was sixty; his health was, as usual, unsatisfactory to him; they had plenty of money and Mrs. Stowe had faith in her ability to make more; besides, she felt that it was time he put some of his great learning into permanent form. He should set about writing his *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* (published, Hartford, 1868). Andover was somewhat isolated, in those days, the winters severe and confining. They would move to the pleasant city of Hartford to be near Mary and Isabella. They would build a house in that grove of oaks on the Park River where Harriet had rambled and built air castles with Georgiana May and Catherine Cogswell, so many years ago—none of your four-square, white-painted New England houses, but a spacious structure in Victorian Gothic, with eight gables, and rooms paneled in natural oak taken from the place. There should be a wide entrance hall, and from the open door, a view of a great conservatory, two stories high, with an Italian fountain in the center. At last, Mrs. Stowe should have a proper place for her plants, and the playing spirit a background for her dreams. In May of 1863 the Stowes began moving into it. The main stairway was unfinished, but the fountain was playing.

“My head aches so with the past confusion that I cannot

get up any feeling of rest," she wrote Mrs. Fields, a month later. She was referring immediately to the confusion of the unfinished house; the coming and going of carpenters, masons and plumbers; the dust, the shavings, the unpacked furniture. But there were other sources of confusion and headache. Professor Stowe was lugubriously opposed to all that was being done. He had dug himself in, in Andover, and hated being disturbed. The house and grounds that Hattie was building were unreasonably large and elaborate, an extravagance beyond their means, a burden for their old age. He was quite right. Long before the place was finished, Mrs. Stowe was distracted by the need of additional funds into dashing off articles for the *Atlantic*, and for all of the ten years that they lived there, had her nose to the grindstone in order to pay the plumber, the painter, the coal dealer, the gardener, the tax collector. The house was never warm enough in winter. Water pipes burst over the Professor's head. In apprehensive discomfort he wandered from room to room dodging the specter of the poorhouse, or made disastrous attempts to economize by doing the repair work himself—mending broken window-panes with tin and nails—which ended characteristically by his going to bed in despair. The location, moreover, was an undeveloped section of Hartford, which, before many years, began to grow up in factories and tenement houses. The Park River became the Hog River. Eventually the Stowe place was completely swallowed up.

And yet there were compensations—the conservatory with its crimson camellias, its ferns and ivies, the fountain, the garden near the house, the grove around it, the sense of

space and quietness in the house itself, the room of her own—places for dreaming undisturbed, places where behind the vexing reality of what they had turned out to be, she could still envision the little world she had dreamed of creating. In the midst of domestic exigencies and literary hack-work, there were moments for singing hymns in the garden of mornings, moments for painting the conservatory flowers on bits of china to give to her friends, or on fans to sell for the Cretans, moments for solitary browsing over George Sand or Walter Scott or Wordsworth or Byron.

But in 1863 exigencies were uppermost. In January, Lyman Beecher died at his last home near Henry Ward in Brooklyn. He made a good end. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course!" His children gathered around him in a happy reunion. "The feeling in all our hearts," wrote one of them, "is more of desire for consecration to Christ's work than I ever knew it to be—more as of old when Father was himself among us in the fullness of the Spirit."

Quite different was the fate of poor Frederick Stowe. Early in July, came news of heavy fighting at Gettysburg. Was the company of which Fred was now Captain involved? For a week, no word! Then a letter from the chaplain. Fred was wounded. A fragment of shell had entered his right ear. But he was in good hands, cheerful, and anxious to get word to his mother.

A day or so of intense relief and thanksgiving, then anxiety returned, and with it, something of bitterness and rebellion. One did not rebel against God. "It was God's

will that . . . the blood of the poor slave, that had cried so many years from the ground in vain, should be answered by the blood of the sons from the best hearth-stones through all the free states." But one might rail against the South. "I have long known *what* and whom we had to deal with in this, for when I wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* I had letters addressed to me showing a state of society perfectly *inconceivable* . . . I wish them no ill, feel no bitterness—they have had a Dahomian education which makes them savage." Yet why was the sympathy of the British Parliament reserved for the women of New Orleans? Why did southern barbarities cause no comment? She was grateful for a letter from the Duchess of Argyll. That family, at least, had remained faithful to the cause of the slave. There were others who, had they lived, would have been equally faithful and even more comforting—Mrs. Browning who had stood by Italy in its crisis, and Lady Byron. "Her great heart, her eloquent letters, would have been such a joy to me!"

Eventually poor Frederick came home and attempted to resume the study of medicine under Oliver Wendell Holmes, just begun before he enlisted. But his wound did not heal, and the pain in his head, acute and persistent, kept him distraught and miserable. Moreover, he had developed unaccountably a thirst for strong drink—a peculiarly ironical and humiliating misfortune for a Beecher. People who did not like the Beechers—and there were always many of them—those directly interested in the sale of liquor who remembered the temperance activities of Lyman Beecher and his sons and daughters, those who re-

sented the Beechers because they were too respectable and those who resented them because they were not respectable enough (the "Old School," for instance), as well as those who sympathized with the South—all found special satisfaction in the fact that a calamity of that sort had visited Mrs. Stowe. Some of them even took pains to see that she escaped none of it, by writing anonymous letters to tell her when and how they had seen Frederick drunk. Here was a sorrow that came and sat on her door-step and refused to be exorcised, bringing the twins, Hope and Fear, to cast their shadows on her, daily, until the end.

Yet the old, tried remedies were useful to mitigate what they could not cure. Ten thousand homes had been darkened as had hers! It was an atonement! God is Love!

We call ourselves a Christian people, and the peculiarity of Christianity is that it is a worship of sorrow. The five wounds of Jesus, the cross, the sepulchre—these are its emblems. In thousands of churches, amid gold and gems and altars fragrant with perfume, are seen the crown of thorns, the nails, the spear, the cup of vinegar mingled with gall; and the Church in many lands and divers tongues prays from age to age, "By thine agony and bloody sweat, by thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial!"—mighty words of comfort, whose meaning reveals itself only to souls fainting in the death-sweat of mortal anguish! They tell all Christians that by uttermost distress alone was the Captain of their salvation made perfect as a Saviour.

To put all this into words in a dozen combinations, to publish it forth, to be aware of a duty to a public looking to her for such wisdom, eased the burden. So did the multifarious distractions of the new house, still unfinished. So

did Georgie's marriage to Henry Allen, Episcopal clergyman of Stockbridge, Massachusetts—a large and exhausting and eminently satisfactory wedding, in the summer of 1864. So did her old habit of visiting—a few days with Mrs. Fields in Boston, or with the Howards or Henry Ward in Brooklyn or at his summer home at Peekskill. So did her quixotic philanthropies, putting into practice her own sermons on forgetting burdens in lifting the burdens of others. There was A—— who must be helped to take a fresh stand in a new place and make herself a respectable woman. Or there was an urchin to be pulled out of the gutter, scrubbed and combed and clothed and fed. What if he did develop colic, in the middle of the night, as a result of overstuffing at dinner, and run away the next morning, he still stood a better chance in life's journey for the little good she had been able to put into him.

For Frederick himself she was constantly seeking remedies. He must take a sea voyage. The sea was always a tonic for the Beechers. When the war was over she rented a cotton plantation for him in Florida. The outdoor life, the remoteness from Hartford saloons would work wonders. Besides, here was a double opportunity, to forget herself in discharging the duty to the freed Negro which was hers by virtue of the conspicuous part she had played in freeing him. She might share in the program for reconstruction advocated by Henry Ward who, in opposition to Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner, believed in conciliating the South and withholding the ballot from the Negro, educating him, meanwhile, to use it wisely and to take care of himself. She would associate herself with a program of

religious education about to be undertaken in Florida by the Episcopal Church.

The cotton plantation under Frederick's management—in the words of her grandson—turned out to be little more than a free boarding-house for a lot of lazy Negroes, which cost her over ten thousand dollars. Undiscouraged, she bought him an orange grove at Mandarin on the St. John's River, two hundred beautiful acres with five large date palms, and an olive tree, besides the oranges, of which there would be a crop of seventy-five thousand the first year! A delightful occupation, raising oranges! Moreover the Bishop of Florida would coöperate in establishing a line of churches along the river. Here was her chance to do the first-hand missionary work which she had often thought Lyman Beecher's daughter should be doing. And how admirably suited was the order and discipline and beauty of the Episcopal Church for training the immature mind of the Negro! Perhaps Charles Beecher could be induced to join the Episcopacy and become their minister.

The orange grove was no doubt to justify itself as a refuge from New England winters, from the burdens of the Hartford house and as another diversion to put between herself and her troubles. But as financial returns from it were slow to come in, it was also another of the many drains on her purse that kept her writing, writing, day after day, year after year, with or without inspiration. Worse than useless to discuss expenses with the Professor. Merely to think of them made him irascible and despondent. Better to prod him along to do a little writing of his own. Like most omnivorous readers, he was lazy about

collecting and ordering his thoughts and preferred his knowledge in his head to the labor of putting it on paper. His publisher had to pretend to have begun printing his work in order to make him finish it. His penmanship, moreover, was so fantastically illegible, that Mrs. Stowe had to copy all that he wrote before the printer could use it. In such fashion was his *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* brought forth. It proved unexpectedly rewarding, earning over ten thousand dollars.

7

Perhaps to be so driven by the need of money was a blessing in disguise. In any case, it had long since quelled the playing spirit's rebellion against routine. Mrs. Stowe had learned to shut herself up for three hours, every morning, seated at her desk with paper before her and pen in hand, finding it fairly easy to plug away at sermons or essays or lives of famous men. From 1863 to 1870 she turned out ten volumes by this method: stories for children; religious poems; *Men of our Times*, seventeen of them done to order, in 1868, and revised with additions four years later; and a long series of essays on all sorts of topics published first in the *Atlantic Monthly* over the pseudonym, Christopher Crowfield, and afterward in four volumes, *Ravages of a Carpet*, *House and Home Papers*, *Little Foxes*, and *The Chimney Corner*.

This hack-work is not without interest. The Christopher Crowfield papers, in particular, dashed off with obvious ease and some pleasure, on topics currently absorbing not

only to readers of the *Atlantic*, but to Mrs. Stowe herself, reveal much about both the author and her times. They were begun in the feverish year 1863, to meet the unexpected cost of the big Hartford house, and over half were written in war time. Very few of them touch directly upon the war, however. In November of 1864, she had planned an article, "gay, sprightly, wholly domestic," but instead an irresistible impulse wrote for her "an offering of sympathy to the suffering and agonized whose homes have forever been darkened." On another occasion, with the President's embargo in mind, she wrote an article urging American women to give up foreign luxuries in favor of American products, an admonition which, ironically enough, was useful propaganda for the very war profiteers whom she denounced in the article itself for having got rich on government contracts. It contains an enlightening comment on war-time prosperity in the North. "Everything has seemed to be so prosperous and plentiful, money has been so abundant and easy to come by, that it has really been difficult to realize that a dreadful and destructive war was raging."

Other articles mirror the changing social conditions resulting from the war-time strides of industrialism; the growth of cities with the attendant increase of the slum problem; the drift of women into industry; the drift of young people, generally, away from the home, particularly the rural home, into larger communities, and the consequent increased responsibility of the community toward young people.

Their recreation especially, concerned Mrs. Stowe. She had always believed in fun and had discovered by experience, particularly by experience in Europe, that many forms of fun banned in her youth were not merely harmless but beneficial. There was something to be said for the Continental Sabbath; there was much to be said for family life in the German beer garden and for dancing under the stars in the Jardin Mabille. Dancing was, in fact, no sin in the right place with the proper supervision; neither was acting in plays nor going to see them, if they were good plays. The amazing success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had convinced her of the power for good latent in the stage. In the beginning the drama had been in the hands of the Church and used for religious purposes. There it should be again. In fact, the whole recreational problem should be taken over by the Church and young people should be taught to look to the Church for their happiness and to think of it as home when they are away from their own.

Home itself, however, was the best place and should be made so happy that none would willingly leave it. The majority of the Christopher Crowfield papers deal with the home. That they appeared in the *Atlantic*, not in *Godey's*, was symptomatic of the intense domesticity of the times. In the midst of national calamity, other people beside Mrs. Stowe "felt the need of a little gentle household merriment and talk of common things"; and were concerned first and last with what happened in their own homes. Mrs. Stowe's heart had never been anywhere else. All public questions must be translated into terms of the

home before they took hold of her. It was Uncle Tom's home and family that troubled her, not abstract theories about slavery.

Christopher Crowfield discusses the household tastes and problems of mid-Victorian America with excellent pedestrian common sense. First of all, a house is only important to the extent that it is a home. The essentials of a home are love, liberty, and hospitality, essentials depending, in the first place, upon a marriage of love, and to be kept in mind in the more mundane aspects of building and furnishing. Although he has forsworn New England white paint in favor of Gothic and walnut and covers the tops of the book-cases with fringed crimson cloth to match the upholstery, he must still have his old-fashioned open fire of logs, an abundance of air and sunlight—no rooms closed and darkened to save the carpets and upholstery—canaries singing in the bow window, plants always fresh and blooming, and pictures, many pictures, engravings or chromolithographs of masterpieces. The furniture must be bought with an eye to comfort and in keeping with the means and position of the owner. In this connection he deprecates the American tendency, growing out of the lack of class consciousness, to build and furnish with a view to the wealth and fashion one hopes to attain, rather than with a realistic conception of what one actually is and has, and to live and especially to entertain with an elaborateness that makes home a burden and hospitality impossible to the housewife in a land where the shortage and inefficiency of servants brings it about that even ladies must do their own work.

Christopher has a good deal to say about servants. The root of the problem in America lies in the fact that although we have never had a servant class, we have brought from the old world the idea that a servant is an inferior. If housework were regarded as the respectable employment that it actually is, women of a superior type might be induced to engage in it; for it is, by nature, the kind of work best suited to the tastes and talents of the majority of women, pleasanter and more healthful than other occupations that are open to them. He regrets the drift of women into factories and offices and the kind of education that has unfitted many of them for their natural rôle.

It is plain to be seen that Christopher is not an ardent feminist, although he makes a plea for the exceptional woman to be allowed to follow her bent without regard to the restrictions of sex, and even favors votes for women as harmless to them and beneficial to the community, especially on all questions of morality and public welfare. Mrs. Stowe was to say her say, later, on the woman movement, but, from first to last, what she wanted for herself was what Mrs. Christopher Crowfield had—a sheltered life in which she could be busy, but not too busy, with the “sweet ordering and arrangement” of her own affectionate and appreciative household.

And what sort of person is Christopher himself? A gentleman and a scholar, a bit absent-minded, a bit whimsical, with a pleasant sense of humor, and enough practicality to keep his family sheltered and comfortable and untroubled, if not wealthy, neither Byronic in his youth, nor Grandisonian in his old age, a very pleasant, dependable

person to live with, in short. He is a type Mrs. Stowe used frequently in her later novels.

He is like Horace Holyoke of *Old Town Folks*. After the death of her Byronic husband, Ellery Davenport, Tina, the heroine, is happy to marry good, reliable Horace, son of the village schoolmaster, whose one idiosyncrasy is the fact that, like Professor Stowe, he has a train of ghostly visitors. Certainly, however, in the years, burdened with financial anxiety and family distress, when she was writing *Old Town Folks*, writing it as a labor of love in the midst of hack-work, putting into it her best thought expressed in her most careful style, she had neither the leisure nor the imaginative energy to dress the Professor in the clothes of Horace or Christopher Crowfield. Rather, these two represent the surrender of the playing spirit to maturity and realism. To a character in one of her books who wants "something grave and deep and high and heroic" for a husband, she replies, "And when you have got such a man, you will have to ask him to go to market for beef . . . to match your worsted, and carry your parcels and . . . cure the chimney of smoking . . . and make the range draw. Don't you think a hero will be rather a cumbersome help in housekeeping? Besides, your heroes like to sit on pedestals and have you worship them. . . . I'd rather have a good, kind *man* who will worship me."

8

It was in the spring of 1869 that Mrs. Stowe, for the time being, at least, gave up trying to save the soul of Lord

Byron. At the grave of Ellery Davenport, the two women who had loved him, his wife and his mistress, stood arm in arm. "It seemed by general consent the kindest thing that could be done for him, to suffer the veil of silence to fall over his memory." Scarcely was the ink dry upon this sentiment before Mrs. Stowe resolved, after all, to rend the veil.

In her own mind she was perfectly clear about the motives that made her change her opinion:

The reading world of America has lately been presented with a book which is said to sell rapidly, and to meet with universal favor, in which the mistress of Lord Byron, the Countess Guiccioli, comes before the world to vindicate his fame from the slanders cast upon him by his wife. . . . A narrow-minded, cold-hearted precision, without intellect to comprehend his genius, or heart to feel for his temptations, formed with him one of those mere worldly marriages common in high life; and finding that she could not reduce him to the mathematical proprieties and conventional rules of her own mode of life, suddenly, and without warning, abandoned him in the most cruel and inexplicable manner. . . . This sudden abandonment drew upon him a storm of scandalous stories which his wife never contradicted. . . . The sensitive victim was driven from England and doomed to be a lonely wanderer on foreign shores. . . . In Italy, under bluer skies, and among a gentler people with more tolerant modes of judgment, he found peace and consolation. A lovely young countess . . . (the Guiccioli) breaking her family ties for his sake, provides the blissful retirement and domestic life for which he was so fitted. . . . Under the elevating influence of love he rises at last to higher realms of moral excellence, becomes the savior of Greece and dies untimely, leaving a nation to mourn.

It was an old story, the gossip of London clubs, already told by Thomas Moore in his life of Byron. Mrs. Stowe herself had heard it since childhood—the story which she had advised Lady Byron to leave unchallenged. But Lady Byron was dead now and so were the others most nearly concerned. High time that the public should know the whole truth about the Byron scandal; that disreputable women like the Countess Guiccioli should be silenced once for all; that young girls should be saved from further romanticizing of the Byronic type and made to understand that it was unhappy material for dreams and disastrous material for matrimony; and that Lady Byron should appear before the world in the shining raiment which was rightfully hers. Mrs. Stowe waited and watched for a statement from Lady Byron's executors giving the lie to "the Guiccioli book." None came. She would set the public right, herself.

Why the Guiccioli book, repeating an oft-repeated tale, should have been the spark that ignited the dynamite needs explaining. It is quite unlikely that Mrs. Stowe was aware of any impulse except those that she avowed. But the article she wrote for the *Atlantic*, "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," published also in *Macmillan's Magazine*, gives evidence of having boiled up from turmoil within. One thing it makes clear: Mrs. Stowe detested the Countess Guiccioli and all her kind. Any respectable wife and mother can understand why it was the Countess's book and not Thomas Moore's that provoked denunciation. That such a creature should not only set herself up in judgment against one of the saints, but also pose as the

final bearer of peace and light to the poet himself, was not to be endured. It is difficult to escape the surmise, also, that for one who had always concerned herself for the well-being of the soul, the revelation that, in his last days, Lord Byron had sought consolation in the paths of sin, was an added bitterness. The Countess had not only desecrated Lady Byron's shrine, but had also dealt the crushing blow to the already broken image of the poet.

The article gives evidence, too, of a welling up of that animosity of the female for the male, always latent in women, a sense of primordial, inherited, and sometimes immediate wrongs, easy to understand and to condone in Mrs. Stowe bearing the burden of the Professor's moody inadequacy and of poor Frederick's illness and dissipation.

It is possible, also, that she was atoning for sins of her own. Hadn't she, in her youth, joined the chorus of maidens who took the side of Lord Byron against his wife? Hadn't she cherished his image in her heart for many a year? Even after the revelation of the depths of his depravity, hadn't she gone on cherishing the image, turning it this way and that, hoping that a different light might soften the deformity that had fastened upon it? And in all that, had she not been guilty of disloyalty to the noble woman who was not only her friend but, in her eyes at least, the embodiment of all the ideals which she had for herself?

In any case, the article was written. All of her family advised her not to publish it. Sensible Mary reminded her that the consequences would be extremely unpleasant. It was not in the nature of Lyman Beecher's daughter to let

that thought stand in her way. A wrong was to be undone and she was quite ingenuous enough to imagine that once the public heard the truth, it would rally to the right side. As for harsh criticism of herself, she was used to it, and at the moment, too full of unhappiness and indignation to care what people thought of her. She was, however, anxious that the story should be well and wisely told and consulted Oliver Wendell Holmes about the manner of telling. Whether he gave her any advice does not appear.

There is something Puckish about the good Doctor's share in this episode. Not only Mrs. Stowe but also the associate editor of the *Atlantic* consulted him about the article. Mr. Fields, the editor, was away. Did the Doctor advise publishing it? He did. On July 18th, a few days before the *Atlantic* came out, he wrote Lothrop Motley that he expected "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" to create a sensation. On September 25th, when the sensation was at its peak, he wrote Mrs. Stowe a heartening letter. The story should have been told to show Byron up for what he was. Henry James, the elder, approved of it. The next day he wrote Motley again about the "Byron Whirlwind," likening it to the famous gale of September, 1815, and washing his hands of the matter, because Mrs. Stowe had made up her mind to publish her story before she consulted him.

"The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" caused a storm and started an argument that has never been entirely closed. For weeks the British and American press was filled with letters and cartoons either denouncing or defending Mrs. Stowe, the former being in the overwhelming ma-



STOWE IT!

P. C. FUN: "Now then, old gal, if you want to make yourself conspicuous, you had better go elsewhere, and not leave your dirty marks there!"
(From a cartoon in FUN, Sept. 18, 1869)



A VOICE FROM THE MIGHTY DEAD

SPIRIT OF BYRON: "Gratuitous slanderer! Whose fame will you blast next for the sake of filthy lucre and public notoriety?"
 SHAKESPEARE TO MILTON: "Humph! Our turn may come next, John, as we did not live happily with our wives!"

UNCLE TOM TO EVA: "Lor' a mussy, Miss Eva, after painting a nigger like me so *white*, how could she paint one of her own brethren so *black*?"

(From a cartoon in WILL-O'-THE-WISP, Sept. 25, 1869)

jority. The article was parodied in "The True Story of Mrs. Shakespeare's Life" by a descendant of Harriet B. Cherstow (*Gentleman's Magazine*, December, 1869). Whole books were devoted to the subject. Early in 1870, the editor of the London periodical, *Once a Week*, published in book form *The Stowe-Byron Controversy, a Complete Résumé of Public Opinion with an Impartial Review of the Merits of the Case*. The opinions thus collected varied from that of the editor of *Macmillan's*, who accepted the facts and thought it high time that an adoring public should know the truth about Byron, to that of the *Daily Telegraph*, which felt that Mrs. Stowe must bear "the stigma of having revealed a dead secret without cause, without authority, and without confirmatory proof." "That lady is a mere sensationalist writer," declared an anonymous member of Congress. "Nothing from her pen is considered reliable by the American public." The majority were in agreement with Thomas Arnold of Oxford, who considered it "an odious narrative, serving the cause of neither literature nor morality. English gentlemen and, much more, English ladies are wont to think that when no end of justice or charity can be served by blackening the character of the dead, errors and vices of a certain kind had much better be covered up in oblivion."

The attitude of the party of the opposition was summed up by Alfred Austin in *A Vindication of Lord Byron* (London, 1869):

To the end of time Byron and his verses will be among the most cherished possessions of mankind; and if posterity deigns to preserve the memory of this foul fable in connection with his

name, it will be only to remember that it was concocted by a woman of a very peculiar temperament and not gifted with a very fine sense of justice, first publicly narrated by an American writer of romances, published by a magazine somewhat in need of notoriety, accepted for a moment by the purient and the incurable lovers of scandal, but after due scrutiny and just reflection entirely repudiated by the definitive voice of an offended people.

Austin's prophecy has not been fulfilled. Posterity has not cherished Byron's verses so warmly nor repudiated Mrs. Stowe's charges. Recent Byron authorities accept them, for the most part, although John Drinkwater thinks the evidence not entirely conclusive. He devotes many pages of *The Pilgrim of Eternity* to a three-cornered correspondence between Lady Byron, Mrs. Villiers, and Augusta Leigh, which illustrates nothing so clearly as the fact that the ways of the human heart are devious and past finding out. What it does show conclusively, however, is that Lady Byron knew or suspected something about Augusta which made the latter tread gently and speak low; that Lady Byron, for some reason, felt that Augusta's soul was in her hand; and that, as Austin said, she was "a woman of a very peculiar temperament."

Mrs. Stowe shut her ears to the turmoil, behavior in which she was greatly assisted by the timely arrival of Georgie's first baby. "I am doing just what you say," she wrote Mrs. Fields, "being first lady-in-waiting to his new majesty . . . getting to be an old fool of a grandma, and to think there is no bliss under heaven to compare with a baby." Nevertheless, the turmoil reached her. To Mrs. Howard she wrote, "It is worth while to have a *storm* of

abuse once in a while, for *one* reason to read the Psalms—they are a radiant field of glory that never shines unless the night shuts in—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms"—Eternal right and justice are with me and I shall triumph by and by. . . . At first I thought the world's people must have all lost their senses—or I. *Could* that account be called uncalled-for!"

Several things amazed her. In the first place, her article had been intended not primarily to expose the poet but to defend Lady Byron. She had touched lightly upon his incestuous passion and bent all her efforts to disprove the charges of heartlessness and cruelty which he had fastened upon his wife. The public, it appeared, was not interested in the wife, but mightily interested in the incestuous passion. In the second place, while few questioned her own honesty in the matter, many questioned her facts. This was a turn of affairs that had never occurred to her. Proof! Had not Lady Byron herself told the story! What further proof could any one want! She was utterly unprepared, for instance, for the views of a certain John Robertson, who wrote of Lady Byron, "Her stories differed. Her narratives and memoranda were given away right and left. The confidantes who knew her best, her peculiarities, her troubles with her daughter, her elder grandson, her servants, never would have repeated her stories with pens and types. They thought her mind touched. Suspicions had become delusions. The charge Mrs. Stowe has published is comparatively recent, and utterly incredible."

Clearly she must begin all over again. In great weariness

ness of spirit, she set about collecting evidence from all of the sources available to her at the time, and built up her argument laboriously with forensic thoroughness, going over and over the same ground to leave no stone unturned. The result was a tedious volume, *Lady Byron Vindicated*, published in 1870. In this, the bitterness of the female against the male, hardly more than latent in her *Atlantic* article, finds full expression. Once for all, she has had enough of masculine self-importance and smugness, of masculine childishness and dissipation; of men who abuse and betray women and then bandy their names over wine at the club; of men who, like the thousands who had condemned her defense of Lady Byron, thought what happened to the woman unimportant as long as the man was saved. Lord Byron himself is sunk in perfidy, his poetry which she has loved all her days—"Manfred" which she and Charles Beecher had quoted ecstatically in the Alps—has become for her, for the time being at least, "Byron's filthy, ghastly writings." One thing she enjoyed. The book gave her the opportunity to relive her eight meetings with Lady Byron, to dwell upon each tender detail, to brood over their letters, to recreate the sacred image in shining raiment and seated on a throne.

Years afterward, Mrs. Stowe's friends and family were still to feel the need of apologizing for her share in the Byron scandal. It is doubtful whether it troubled her so long. For one thing, other matters were too pressing. In the fall of 1870, the charming Georgie fell prey to a nervous illness, the cause of acute suffering to herself and to those who loved her, from which she never recovered.

Shortly afterward, poor Frederick decided to try what a long sea voyage would do for his affliction. He took passage on a sailing vessel and eventually landed in San Francisco. On the street he met a college friend who invited him to dine. No one ever heard of him again.

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Indeed it must have been difficult, in the six calamitous years following the Byron whirlwind, not to feel with Jonathan Rossister of *Old Town Folks* "that the whole race of men were a set of neglected suffering children, bred like fish-spawn on a thousand shores!" How could one see the love of God in the inexplicable curse that had fallen upon little Georgie! Frederick, of course, would return—some day! Each mail might bring a letter! Each knock at the door might be his! But the days grew into weeks and the weeks into years. Often as his mother tried to comfort herself with the words of Lady Byron, "As long as they are in God's world, they are in ours," her mind must have been haunted by memories of Frederick's shattered life; by horrors evoked at the thought of San Francisco, so wicked and so far away. Her silence, almost unbroken upon this grief, is vastly eloquent.

Misfortunes of other Beechers touched her nearly, also. The doughty Catharine, at seventy, was living through a brief disastrous career as principal of that same Hartford Female Seminary which she had founded. In 1872, died Thomas Perkins, Mary's dependable husband, to whom for years Mrs. Stowe had looked for wisdom and friendliness

in all of her emergencies. Before that Isabella (Mrs. John Hooker) had become a pariah in Hartford. Long interested in the cause of women, she was associated with Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had toured the Middle West making speeches for woman's suffrage, had thrust bills to secure property rights and votes for women, before the Connecticut legislature, and had gone in person to address a committee of the United States Senate on giving women the franchise. Obviously, she was not a lady! Obviously, also, her family must stand by her.

If it was a strain upon faith to see divine purpose in the troubles of these deserving people, how could one see the love of God through the malevolent fog of persecution and slander that crept about the beloved figure of Henry Ward, in the eighteen seventies, blurring it even for his friends, threatening to obscure it altogether! One knew one's self to be a sinner in need of chastening, secretly rebellious, tempted by the world and the flesh. But Henry, untiring and fearless witness for Christ, more potent than any other America had known, Henry to whom all of the Beechers looked for guidance and comfort—what end could his humiliation serve?

For years, whenever Mrs. Stowe had felt herself adrift upon a sea of trouble, the thought of Henry, valiant and successful, had been an anchorage. But she had, at times, been fearful for him, too. Any one who climbed so high was in danger of a disastrous fall. His amazing popularity was a temptation to him and a goad to his enemies. He had long been a butt for the press. Whatever he did was

likely to be amusingly unconventional and a source of controversy that promoted circulation and diverted the profane bystander who has always relished seeing the parson and his flock in hot water. On one occasion, Catharine had been provoked into publishing a letter to "the Honorable Conductors of the Public Press" rebuking them for circulating divers small, silly and impertinent stories about her father, brother, and sister. But on the whole, the Beechers were used to the press. There were other snares for the minister, also, of which Mrs. Stowe was well aware. "It is the ill-fortune of every successful clergyman," she wrote, "to stir the sympathies and enkindle the venerative faculties of certain excitable women, old and young, who follow his footsteps and regard his works and ways with rapture."

But in all of her fears for him, she had never imagined Henry involved in the kind of scandal most odious to respectable middle-class Anglo-Saxons, most disastrous for a minister, most foreign to her ideal of him. What bitter irony that it should emanate from his own charity, the work of those whom he had befriended and fathered, members of his church, teachers in his Sunday School, intimates of his fireside, souls he had saved!

Time vindicated Henry. Time eased her own burdens. Perhaps the very multiplicity of them kept any one from being insupportable. The daily habit of turning her thoughts upon all sorts of subjects and writing them out to pay her bills stood her in good stead. If what she wrote in the calamitous years from 1870 to 1876 is negligible as literature, it is a monument to self-control and courage.

Before the Byron scandal subsided, she turned out what

she described as a pretty story for a child, *Little Pussy Willow*. When Henry's troubles were brewing, she set about giving him such support as she could by taking to heart the success of John Howard's paper, the *Christian Union*, of which Henry was editor. To this she contributed a great variety of articles, mostly religious; sketches of Florida, *Palmetto Leaves*, 1873; nineteen studies of Bible heroines, *Woman in Sacred History*, 1873; and two serials, *My Wife and I*, 1871, and *We and Our Neighbours*, 1875. For *Old and New*, the paper edited by Mary's son-in-law, the same Edward Everett Hale, Jr., who had once tempted her with twenty dollars for three pages, she wrote *Pink and White Tyranny*, 1871, and collaborated in a novel, *Six of One by Half a Dozen of the Other*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Adeline D. T. Whitney, Lucretia P. Hale, Frederick W. Loring, Frederick B. Perkins, and Edward E. Hale, 1872. She helped Catharine with *The New Housekeeper's Manual*, 1873, and *Principles of Domestic Science as Applied to the Duties and Pleasures of the Home*, 1873. To the *Atlantic*, she contributed "Sam Lawson's Old Town Fireside Stories," 1872.

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The last were popular with her contemporaries, and useful to her. Together with selections from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* they formed the staples of a series of readings from her works which she undertook in the fall of 1872, and again in 1873. There was an ordeal for a little, old woman in her sixties, who had never wanted to make a speech and

had never made one! But it turned out to be as easy a way of making money as she had found, although no way was really easy. The first tour took her through New England; the second, to Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Zanesville, Pittsburgh, and Dayton. It was forlorn to be alone in strange hotels, and exasperating to get letters from the Professor, cozily at home, writing as if from the Slough of Despond. In the West, the distances between appointments meant long, hard days on crowded trains with no chance to rest before readings. But she would not have been a Beecher if she had not enjoyed moving her audiences to laughter and tears. And there were heart-warming incidents, also. There was the deaf woman in Portland who would rather have seen her than the Queen; and the mother who had brought her two little girls, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Eva, fifty miles to hear the reading; and the aging mother of a Christian family in Dayton, who attributed all of their blessings to her early conversion by temperamental George, dead these thirty years. In Cincinnati there were the old homes to be visited, the old life to be recalled—a melancholy pleasure. To move from place to place had this advantage, too, that it kept her thoughts from running inward to brood on her troubles.

There were other benefits from her writing. It was gratifying, for instance, to receive so many letters about *My Wife and I* and *We and Our Neighbours*—more than had been written to her about any other book since *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She was glad that her ideas on current questions were helpful to so many people.

My Wife and I she began as a chatty story of fashionable New York, about which, if we may judge from the book itself, she knew nothing; but before she was well under way, a variety of moral purposes caught up with her. Here was an opportunity to deplore the "shoddy aristocracy" of war profiteers with their wastefulness, their ostentation, their snobbishness, their frivolity, their selfishness, their lack of principle; and the importation of French morals, particularly domestic morals, with French fashions and French novels, to the undermining of the simple, thrifty, democratic, God-fearing, American tradition. Here was an opportunity to drive home, once more, the evils of strong drink, and, also, to say something about the bondage of the American press to the money interests that subsidized it through the advertising columns.

And here, too, was an opportunity to set forth the Beecher attitude on the woman question, in a way which should make it clear to the public that Isabella Beecher Hooker had nothing in common with the notorious Claflin sisters, whom Mrs. Stowe lampooned in the character, Audacia Dangereyes. (One wonders whether the portrait of Audacia was in any way connected with the attack on Henry Ward, which appeared in the Claflins' journal, shortly afterward.) As Christopher Crowfield had already said, there was nothing unwomanly about depositing a slip of paper in a ballot-box. Moreover, a state ruled only by men was as one-sided as a home ruled only by the father. But the woman question had other aspects, such as the iniquitous double standard of morals and the financial dependence of women. Women should not only have

equal property rights with men, but should be trained for self-support and, if they had talents, should be allowed to use them, and not be forced into marriage as the only way of earning a living. All of these ideas were more or less revolutionary in the seventies. However, Mrs. Stowe was quite out of sympathy with the loose views on marriage promulgated by Mrs. Stanton and others. It was a great mistake that Mrs. Stanton should use the name of such a woman as George Sand in the cause of women, although Mrs. Stowe herself enjoyed George Sand's books. Marriage was a sacrament and still the ideal career for the average woman. If a woman wished to extend her beneficent influence and activities beyond the home, the Church furnished her the best channel.

Once again the religious theme absorbs her book. In *My Wife and I* she protests against the secularization of education in the colleges, the undermining of religious faith through the sciences. There is no conflict between science and religion:

The growth of society, the development of new physical laws, and the modern scientific rush of the human mind is going to modify the man-made theologies and creeds; some of them will drop away as the blossom does when the fruit forms, but Christ's religion will not pass away. . . . The way to get rid of doubts in religion, is to practice what we *don't* doubt. . . . The Sermon on the Mount has a direct answer to the questions any thoughtful man must want answered. Is there a Father in Heaven? Will he help us? May the troubles of life be our discipline? Is there a better life beyond? . . . Men always know it when they meet a bit of Christ's sermons walking out bodily in good deeds.

Here is her phrasing of Whittier's verses, her reply to doubtful doubts.

On a fly-leaf of the copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* now in the Yale University library, she once wrote: "The voice said, Cry— And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

» VII »

IN GREEN PASTURES



THE LATER HARTFORD HOME

I

IF these pages should lead those who read them to a firmer trust in God and a deeper sense of His fatherly goodness throughout the days of our earthly pilgrimage, I can say with Valiant for Truth in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 'I am going to my Father's and tho with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am.' "

These words, in the trembling hand of old age, stand at the beginning of the autobiography which Harriet Beecher Stowe started to write with the help of her son Charles, in 1887. So life, in spite of everything, had been good! Nor was the declaration a mere oratorical flourish—still less the voice of inexperience or of one who had shut her eyes to life. It came from a person who, looking back over her seventy-seven years, knew that she had lived them with courage and honor. A year earlier, Henry Drummond wrote to Scotland from Hartford: "Next door to Twain I found Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a wonderfully

agile old lady, as fresh as a squirrel still, but with the face and air of a lion. I have not been so taken with any one on this side of the Atlantic."

To see life as good was a habit of mind, fostered by the determination of the playing spirit that, in spite of the obvious wretchedness of the sinning world, life could and should be good and beautiful and exciting. No doubt the attitude reflected, also, the realization that life is not its great moments of either joy or disaster, but the day-by-day level of little things.

Mrs. Stowe's daily load was gradually lightened, after 1870; partly because in general, when a load is really too much for us, we don't assume it or it slips off our shoulders of its own weight for some one else to pick up, if it must be carried; partly, in her case, because material conditions improved. Oakwold, the large place in Hartford, was sold, at last. A wrench to surrender one's dreams, but a relief not to have the expense of them. The new place, small by comparison, on Forest Street, near Isabella, was cozy and adequate. Investments which she complained to John Howard had brought her no returns, either improved with time, or were replaced by more lucrative ones; for her closing years appear to have been untroubled by money worries. Three of her children were a great satisfaction.

The twins, Hattie and Eliza, inexplicable offspring of two impractical people, early developed the New England "faculty" so much admired by their mother. If they had cherished private dreams in their girlhood, they had surrendered them in their thirties, to take over the management of the Stowe affairs. Indefatigable housekeepers,

with a genius for order and system, they managed expenses, they managed the house, the garden, the servants, the birds, the cats, the dogs; they moved the family to Florida in the winter and moved it back to Hartford in summer; they managed Pa and Ma Stowe. With all of the mechanics of living so efficiently taken care of, the Professor could browse at will among his books, and Mrs. Stowe could write undisturbed except by the exigencies of her mind and heart. The twins were helpful in other ways, too, listened to their mother's stories as she wrote them, sometimes took her dictation and copied her manuscripts.

And Charles, the youngest, steered his course like a dependable mariner, doing what was expected of him at the appointed time. At twenty-four he was graduated from Harvard and went to Bonn to study theology. Before he was thirty, he was happily married and settled as the minister of the Congregational Church at Saco, Maine. A few years later, he came to the Windsor Avenue Congregational Church, Hartford, where he remained, a prop and comfort for his mother's old age.

And there was the Professor! So unattractive he seems to an outsider, with booming voice and bulky person, despondent, irritable, importunate, childish! Yet here, if one wished to see it, was the poetic temperament, and that, moreover, with the somewhat unusual accompaniment of Puritan morals. If as the years of married life piled up upon each other, it became increasingly difficult to see in him the romantic youth Harriet Beecher had dreamed of loving, perhaps the dreams themselves had grown dim. In the meantime, she and the Professor had weathered

more than forty years together. His very faults had come to seem like a part of herself; his virtues, also. His great learning, his brilliant mind, clear and active to the end, were a lively and permanent satisfaction. It was pleasant to see him on their Florida porch, lost in his books through the long, sunny days. "My old Rabbi," she had come to call him, with that whimsical blending of apology and pride one so often feels for one's family. His thoughts and hers ran harmoniously. And what good company he could be when not depressed! And in depression, if he was dependent, he was dependent upon her. Like the child who gives his mother the greatest trouble, he was perhaps the dearest of her children. There was poetry, rich and sacred, in the love of the old for each other.

Life was not only its joys and sorrows, but the people who shared them. One could always fall back upon the Beechers, now innumerable. Besides the beloved Henry Ward, there were others whose lives were a pleasure to remember. The delightful Charles had refused to enter the Episcopacy and become the Stowes' minister at Mandarin; but he had given up his pleasant church at Georgetown, Massachusetts, to preach to the colored people at Newport, Florida, on the Gulf. Charles knew what it was to lose a son; for his own Frederick, seriously wounded at Gettysburg, had been killed fighting Indians in Colorado. With Mrs. Stowe he had other sympathies, also—the spirit world, flowers, music. His contributions to the *Plymouth Collection of Hymns* were a source of pride.

In Brooklyn with Henry Ward was Edward, her long-time councilor, nominally retired, after forty vigorous



L. G. Howe.

From a photograph made in 1882.

years in the ministry, but helping to edit the *Christian Union* and founding Congregational churches in New Jersey. In Elmira, New York, Thomas had built up a church that fulfilled Christopher Crowfield's conception of one as not only a place of worship, but also a center for the life of its people. In Hartford were, of course, Mary and Isabella and their children and grandchildren, an ever-widening family circle, a bit strait-laced, according to Mark Twain—they would not let him smoke in the parlor—but the Almighty had not made any better people.

Mark Twain, himself, who lived around the corner, was one of the charms of Hartford. He not only hobnobbed with the Professor and Charles Dudley Warner and Horace Bushnell in their Monday Evening Club, but he had time to prepare jokes for an old lady who loved them. He would come calling, bringing in his wake a procession of unexpected visitors dressed like an animated Jarley's wax-works. Or as the Stowes were leaving for Florida, he would dash over to say good-by, collarless and tieless, and later send the forgotten collar and tie with a note, "Here is the rest of me!" Twain, like Mrs. Stowe herself, attracted pleasant visitors to Hartford: writers—Holmes, Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Julia Ward Howe, Parkman, Aldrich, Howells, and others; and actors—Booth, Barrett, and Irving; and generals—Sheridan and Sherman.

In Hartford, indeed, were many friends, some of them friends of her youth, though these were dropping away. And there were other friends. The Howards in Brooklyn had shared much of life with her, not only holidays in Italy, but days of anxiety and bereavement. With her they

had gone into the valley of Henry Ward's humiliation. Like her, they knew the feeling of rooms in the house left empty by departed children.

And what better friends than the James T. Fields whose home had, for so many years, been a place of refreshment for her weary spirit! Their house on Charles Street was itself a pleasure, with its view of the sea from the rear, its quiet book-lined rooms. Like many New Englanders who have little time to read, Mrs. Stowe relished the odor of books, the sight of them filling shelves and tables. Some day, of course, one would read them, and in the meantime, how they exuded the aura of gentlemen and scholars! To the Fields she could go to be coddled, to enjoy the diversions of Boston—music, lectures, people. There she talked by the fire with Holmes; with Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, the American Maria Edgeworth, a former Sunday-school pupil of Lyman Beecher's who, like Mrs. Stowe, had, of late years, found much that she needed in the Episcopal Church; or with the lovely Sarah Orne Jewett for whom in odd moments she sought a husband; or with the Fields themselves. They had always been good to her. Mr. Fields had been endlessly patient about her manuscripts—invariably late, untidy, unpunctuated—and generous about royalties, paying them in advance when she needed money, as she usually did. They sympathized with her enthusiasms, even with her interest in spiritualism, and entered into her friendships.

Of these, they enjoyed especially George Eliot, whom Mrs. Stowe never saw, but from whom she received eight letters in as many years. George Eliot was out of sym-

pathy with spiritualism, she thought Mrs. Stowe should have kept silent about Lord Byron; but she admired her, none the less, and when Mrs. Stowe opened the correspondence between them, addressing her as "Dear Friend," she accepted the letter in the generous spirit in which it had been sent. The Professor shared the friendship, also, doing his part to convert George Eliot to spiritualism. He was interested in George Henry Lewes, because of his knowledge of Goethe, and thought George Eliot herself a better Christian out of the Church than the majority were in it. Both the Stowes and the Fields were full of admiration for the courage of her private life, as well as for the moral tone of her work. What she needed was "jollitude." And what better place to get it than America? They were continually urging her to visit them, especially in Florida.

2

Florida, where the Stowes spent the winters from 1869 to 1884, took the place of Oakwold as a garden of reverie for the playing spirit. The trip down by boat from New York, with a stay of a day and a half in Charleston, was itself an excursion. Sometimes there was the excitement of a storm at sea. And then they would steam placidly up the broad St. John's River to the little wharf at Mandarin, where all of the neighbors, black and white, would be waiting to welcome them with waving flags and handkerchiefs. The Stowe place would be overgrown after the summer's neglect—the garden a jungle of cannas, dwarf bananas, and roses; the ground littered with fallen oranges; the

house a dusty cave of spider-webs and cockroaches for the twins to exercise their house-cleaning talents upon. But in a week, all would be in order again—a place to escape the New England winter, a place where the world receded, where even the noisome details of Henry Ward's humiliation could be banished from mind, for hours at a time.

The house had grown up from a hut, like a play house, with a room added here and a gable there, and a wide veranda embracing all of it, even the mammoth live-oak against which the hut had sheltered. Other live-oaks hung over it with great fringes of gray moss. To the rear stretched the orchards—orange trees, lemon trees, peach trees, thousands of them—and a vineyard. Beyond towered a forest of live-oaks and water-oaks and southern pines as tall as the stone pines of Italy. Jasmine, like golden fleece, twined about them, and beneath grew violets, silver bells, holly, azaleas. There were blue iris and white lilies by the water courses and, before the house on the slope toward the river, a rose garden. Everywhere flowers to keep one painting in feverish eagerness to absorb their beauty. Below the garden, five miles from shore to shore, stretched the river, where, now and then, the trailing smoke of a steamboat brought memories of the world outside. When the sun was so warm that lizards darted from all the shingles of the roof and birds sang on every twig, just to be alive was good.

But Mrs. Stowe had not forgotten that she was a missionary. It was fun to be a missionary, to mother a community, to build a church and school, to train a humble



H B Stowe

From a photograph made in 1884.

flock in the ways of the Lord. To Mrs. Howard she wrote of preparations for Easter. She had built a pulpit of her Gothic fire boards and a cross of cedar and white lilies. At another time, she had bought a little Mason and Hamlin organ in New York. Hattie played the organ, the congregation was the choir, and Mr. Stowe preached a sermon "to show that Christ is going to put everything right at last." But they needed a bell. Would Mrs. Howard inquire the cost of one? How good, how New England-like if they might hear a "first bell, a Sunday school bell, and a meeting bell" ringing through the orange groves!

By and by, the Bishop of Florida built a real Episcopal Church at Mandarin. The young rector was "perfect" in all but physical strength. Florida was no place for Calvinism! Had the Pilgrims landed in Florida instead of on Plymouth Rock, how different the history of their theology! Whenever dreamers reared on bleak New England hills on "dry husks of doctrinal catechism" drifted into happier climes, they were likely to drift, also, into the poetic liturgy of the Episcopal Church. They might even grow friendly with Rome, as the Stowes did with Father Batazzi and the French nuns on the banks of the St. John's.

But then the growing unity of Christians was one of the happier signs of the times. It was encouraging that Christians everywhere were beginning to keep the ancient feasts and fasts of the Church. What comfort Mrs. Stowe had from keeping Lent and Holy Week! "At Gethsemane, the Cross, and the Sepulchre, Christians *feel* together.

They *feel*, not *know*, that they are one." Gethsemane, the Cross, the Sepulchre—symbols of the Atonement! But there was Easter, also, and Christmas.

3

John Howard was asking for a Christmas story. As Mrs. Stowe mused over themes, she remembered that there had been no Christmas in the Litchfield parsonage. There was a new theme: how little Harriet Beecher would have enjoyed an Episcopal Christmas. How little Harriet would have enjoyed many things denied to her! A lonely child! And yet the old life had been good. Its ways came back to her, and places and people, long forgotten, rose to the surface of her mind—even her lost dreams of herself. The story grew and grew. If circumstances had been but slightly different, how altogether different the life of Harriet Beecher! There were Grandma Foote and Aunt Harriet, for instance, who, instead of living on a farm near Guilford, might have lived in one of the charming old houses in Boston that Mrs. Stowe had grown to love. Indeed, she had moved them there, years ago. As Madam Kittery and her daughter Deborah, they had already appeared in *Old Town Folks*. It was at their house in Boston that Tina had met Ellery Davenport. But Harriet would not have fallen in love with Ellery; with a dashing, rather worldly young man, to be sure, probably an Englishman, but one whose innate nobility would awaken with love, who needed only her hand to guide him in the ways of peace. A prosperous young man, moreover, whose

wife should lead a life of sweet ordering and arrangement.

How far away the old life, and yet how swiftly the distance had been covered! She sent her book, *Poganuc People*, to Dr. Holmes, for he was one of the few who could remember the days it described.

She was an old woman. Her Boston publishers celebrated her seventy-first birthday with a garden-party at Governor Claflin's in Newtonville. Garrison was there, and Frederick Douglass, and younger people—Howells, Lucy Larcom, Frances Hodgson Burnett. There were poems by Whittier and Holmes and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps and her own Georgie; and Henry Ward made a speech. They were remembering what she had done for the slave, of course. She would tell them about the colored people in Florida; about her old neighbor who had accumulated a two-story house, an orange grove, a sugar-mill, "twenty head of cattle, four head of 'hoss,' forty head of hen" and ten children—all his, every one his. The colored people were not perfect, but they were happy, they knew how to enjoy themselves, and they had done well. In conclusion, "Let us never doubt, everything that ought to happen is going to happen."

She and the Professor, visiting the invalid Georgie in Boston, were reading the journal of John Quincy Adams and could not but love the old man. He had "lived for humanity, for truth, for Christ, when Christ stood chained in the person of the slave," and had died without seeing the dawn of freedom. But all who had opposed him were gone, likewise, silent in dust. So were a whole generation

who had come after him—Chase whom she had known in Cincinnati, and Stanton, and Seward, and the rest. So were the English people, their contemporaries, whose friendship had stirred her—the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Byron, Charles Kingsley, Mrs. Browning, George Eliot, Joseph Sturge. Life was irreparable and eternity would not efface from the soul whether it had done well or ill.

She “had come into the land of leavetaking” and felt like one who had been “playing and picnicking on the shores of life and had waked from a dream, late in the afternoon, to find that almost every one had gone over to the other side.” She was an old woman who must put her house in order. To potter among its accumulations, assorting hundreds of letters, was to dwell in a spirit world of people who had died and emotions of which even the memory was dim. How in the long perspective of the years, joy and sorrow merged! What then was reality? The world that had weighed upon her from without? Or that garden of reverie where she had retreated from its burdens?

Professor Stowe was dying. She must sit by his side until the end. She would read the life of Christ, over and over, for it kept her mind from wandering and eased her great weariness. When he was gone there would be no one left to lean upon her. There was pain in the knowledge that life was slipping away; but in sleep there came, at times, “perceptions of a spiritual life . . . the joy of it like no other joy . . . where the enthusiasm of love is the calm habit of the soul.”

She would write her testament, with Charley's help. It should show to men that God was good. It was a pleasure nodding by the fire, to dwell again in her father's house. Had she been lonely on the fringe of life? But now it whirled about her. She could romp once more in the parsonage garrets with Charles and Henry. For Henry had come back. They were all coming back, even Frederick. She must have his room in readiness. But her mind wandered like a running brook. She would go out into the Litchfield woods among the white-robed shepherdesses, or into the upland meadows where the sweet wild strawberries were hidden among the daisies. There was an old man by the garden gate. What was he saying? He wished to shake her hand. He had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* "with satisfaction and instruction." Ah, yes! That was a great book. God wrote it!

4

On July 1, 1896, a group of friends stood near an open grave in the Andover burying ground, singing a hymn that Mrs. Stowe herself had written:

"It lies around us like a cloud,
A world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be."

But Sarah Orne Jewett wrote to Mrs. Fields, "I love to think of the purple flowers you laid upon the coffin."

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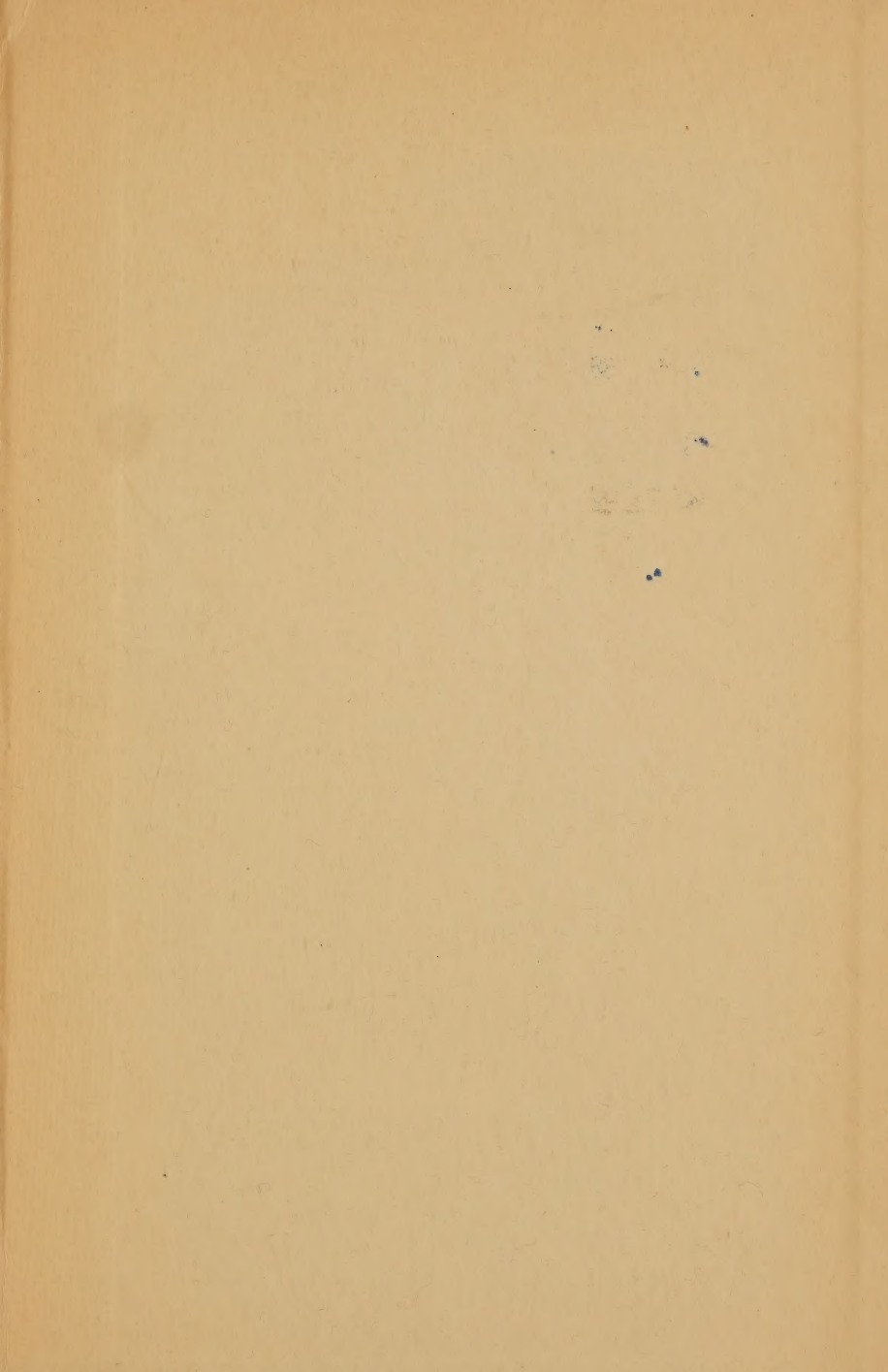
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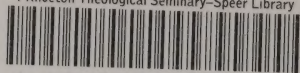
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